

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL
INITIATION SCHOOLS ON ADOLESCENTS SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF
RURAL THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY**

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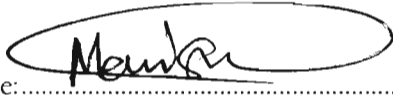
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This dissertation represents the original work and it has never been accepted at any University for any degree or any other purpose. Other peoples' work used in this dissertation have been fully acknowledged and referenced in the text.

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ABSTRACT

There has been a great deal of focus on young people and how they obtain information about reproductive health matters in the era of HIV/AIDS. However, there has very limited research on role of traditional initiation schools in the era of HIV/AIDS. In some parts of South Africa, young men and women continue to attend traditional initiation schools. The primary aim of these schools is to disseminate information about sexuality and other reproductive health matters in order to ensure that young people are well prepared for their future social growth, societal responsibilities and conjugal matters. Interviews were conducted with young people who had attended traditional initiation schools. The study was conducted in three villages in the Limpopo Province in South Africa where traditional initiations are widely practices. The study examines the impact of traditional initiation schools on adolescent's sexuality and reproductive health behaviour. The findings of the study show that traditional initiation schools have an important role to play in imparting information about sexuality and reproductive health. Traditional initiation schools prepare young people for the transition to adulthood. It is believed that these schools produce men who are independent, brave and courageous and women who are good mothers, wives and daughter-in-laws. However, some young men and women feel that they are more likely to engage in sexual activities soon after attending traditional initiation schools. This is because there is massive use of sexually explicit language during the process of initiation. Some young people feel that traditional initiation schools have contributed to the increase in sexual activity and as a result, negative reproductive health outcomes. However, the main conclusion is that traditional initiation schools have an important role to play to shaping the sexual and reproductive health behaviour of Venda young men and women.

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
HBM	Health Belief Model
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TIS	Traditional Initiation Schools
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
WOSM	World Organisation of the Scout Movement

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

Traditional initiations are a practice which is done in some African countries such as Lesotho, Zambia, Ghana, Republic of Congo and South Africa. The focus of this study is on adolescents attending traditional initiation schools in the province of Limpopo in South Africa. In this study the terms adolescents and young people are used interchangeably. Adolescence is a time of emotional, physical, and psychological development and contributes substantially to the well-being of the individual in adulthood (Chilman, 1990). In many developed countries, adolescence is characterized by schooling, dating and extracurricular activities while in much of the developing world it is often characterized by early marriage and/or immediate entry into the work force (Friedman, 1993; Ainsworth and Over, 1994).

The adolescence stage is a period of life between the beginning of sexual maturation (puberty) and adulthood, which usually occurs between the ages 13 and 19. However, the South African Youth Commission defined adolescence as a period between 14 and 24 years (National Youth Commission, 1997). During this period the adolescent experiences not only physical growth and change but also emotional, psychological, social, and mental change and growth (Llyod, 2005). The onset of menstrual periods (menarche) is one of the most visible signs that a girl is entering puberty. During this period, adolescents are also expected to adopt adult behaviour and responses. Adolescence is a period of profound change and adjustment which may cause a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about one's place in society and the world.

1.2. Why Focus on Adolescents?

Approximately one-third of the world's population are aged 10 to 24 years (UNDP, 2000). Four out of five young people of this age group are living in the developing countries, and this figure is expected to increase to 87% by the year 2020 (UNDP, 2000). South Africa is one of the countries in the developing world that has a

relatively youthful population. Almost 46% of the total population of South Africa are under the age of 20 years (Statistics South Africa, 2003). Adolescence is usually accompanied by the acquisition of new behavioural patterns, which if continued, may have long term consequences, placing young people at risk of a broad range of reproductive health problems including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy (Meekers, 1994; Vundule *et al*, 2001; Stanton *et al*, 1999).

Young people are the most vulnerable group to HIV infections. This is largely because young people are believed to be at the stage of 'experimentation' and 'exploration' (South African Government, 2005; Kalipeni *et al*, 2003). It is usually during the period of adolescence that young people become sexually active (Turner, 1990). Sexual activity can lead to unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, if engaged without protection (Stall *et al*, 1990). There has been, and there continues to be an increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections, especially among young people around the world (WHO, 2000). Unwanted pregnancy among adolescents is also a major problem in South Africa. The most salient social consequences of teenage pregnancy are school drop-out or interrupted education; vulnerability to or participation in criminal activities; abortion; social ostracism; child neglect and abandonment; school adjustment difficulties for children; rape, abuse, and incest; adoption; lack of social security; poverty (Ncayiyana, 1989; O'Mahony, 1987; Boulton, and Cunningham, 1993).

South Africa has one of the largest numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS. The results from antenatal sentinel surveillance surveys conducted on blood samples from women attending antenatal clinics show that HIV prevalence has increased dramatically over the last decade. According to the 2004 national HIV survey, 32.5% of women attending state antenatal clinics were HIV positive (Department of Health, 2005). At the end of 2003, there were almost 5.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa (UNAIDS, 2004). Half of all new infections occur in young people aged 15-25 years, who constitute one-third of those living with HIV/AIDS worldwide (Avert Organization, 2005). Although the majority of young people have heard of HIV/AIDS, many still do not know how it is transmitted and do not believe that they are at risk. Moreover, they lack the skills and support to adopt health seeking behaviour. It is, therefore, very important that young people have a

clear understanding of the consequences of early sexual activity. Education has very important role to play in the development of young people.

1.3. The Role of Education

Education can be defined as a life long process which enables the continuous development of a person's capabilities as an individual and as a member of society (Richard, 2004). Usually, the purpose of education is to contribute to the full development of an autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed person (Avert, Organisation, 2005; Janowitz, 1976). Education can be provided in a formal, informal and non-formal form. The formal form of education is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, educational system running from primary through to tertiary institutions. The informal form of education is the process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience, such as from family, friends, peer groups, the media and other influences and factors in the person's environment. Non-formal education is organised educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives (WOSM, 2001).

All form of education can play a vital role in the development of young people. This is because if young people are to be able to function and contribute within the society in which they live, they must acquire and develop the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet their needs. These involve obtaining the essentials of life, including food, health and shelter, employment, or other meaningful activity; and a sense of security (WHO, 1996; TACADE, 1986). In addition, young people need to be able to cope with change, which requires flexibility, adaptability and mobility (WOSM, 2001; WHO, 1996). Education can help young people gain constructive control of technological progress through access to knowledge and skills (WOSM, 2001 ; UNFPA, 1999). It can also assist young people to combat isolation by developing a sense of belonging and identity, gaining acceptance and being recognised (UNFPA, 2000).

Young people also have specific needs which will vary from one country to another and indeed from one individual to another, depending on the particular circumstances.

In most cases, however, they need to develop themselves, to test their own potential abilities and to discover the world around them. Young people need to have access to knowledge and competence to understand the real world. They need to acquire an active and responsible role in social life, and through that role, a status and a stake in society.

For young people who live in traditional societies, the importance of non-formal education can result from the specific characteristics that are intrinsic to that particular society and which are, to a large extent, not present in either formal or informal education. For example, these characteristics are usually people-centred and place a strong emphasis on the commitment and responsibility of each individual in pursuing their own personal growth process (Michelle, 2005). They also reinforce the individual's motivation to take an active part in the learning process (Belle and Thomas, 2005). Lastly, their emphasis is about developing young people's skills so that they make informed choices about their behaviour, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices (UNICEF, 2000).

1.4. The Role of Traditional Initiation Schools

Traditional initiation schools have an important role to play in imparting cultural knowledge (Stanson, 1999). It is usually in traditional initiation schools that young people obtain instruction in courtship and marriage practices (Ibid). In addition, cultural expectations regarding their social responsibilities and conduct as men and women in the community are communicated during these initiations; and following initiation, the young person is given numerous privileges associated with their new position in society (Ibid). Adolescents in Venda are expected to attend traditional initiation schools. At these schools the adolescents are taught various matters about manhood and womanhood. Studies have demonstrated that there is a direct link between the way people behave and the way they are socialised (Ngaloshe, 2000; Keesing, 1982; Richards, 1932).

In South Africa, the government has enacted a number of laws to regulate the practice of traditional initiation schools. Of particular interest are the Northern Province Circumcision Act No. 6 of 1996, the Application of Health Standards in Traditional

Circumcision Act No. 6 of 2001 and the Free State Initiation School Health Act No. 1 of 2004. These Acts focus mainly on the circumcision of men and are applicable to three provinces in which traditional initiations are widely practiced: Limpopo, East Cape and Free State. The main aim of these regulations is to ensure the health and safety of young men completing the process of initiation.

These Acts provide for the appointment of an expert to administer the process of initiation in order to ensure the compliance of traditional initiation schools with provincial health standards. These Acts prescribe the use of sterilized needles for all circumcisions. The Acts also stipulate that young men have to be medically examined and declared fit in order to undergo circumcision (Matyu, 2005). Circumcision is also supposed to be conducted by traditional surgeons with a valid licence that permits circumcision (Matyu, 2005). In addition, the Acts require that before undergoing circumcision, permission needs to be obtained from parents or guardians. The Act discourage boys younger than 19 from undergoing the initiation process. Some of the programmes suggested by the government for the practice of traditional initiation school include:

- Crash courses for managers of initiation schools;
- Recommendations of the establishment of a provincial committee;
- Implementation of a health promotion programme regarding safer practices; and
- Pre-screening of prospective initiates by local clinics and ensuring proper referral mechanisms (Matyu, 2005).

The Acts were strongly opposed by some of the traditional leaders in some of the provinces who objected to the involvement of women in the process of decision-making about traditional initiation schools. Since the Acts mainly focus on traditional initiation schools for young men and traditional leaders felt that women should not be involved in issues affecting men (South African Government, June 2004).

1.5. Justification for the Study

The area of traditional initiation schools has not been carefully studied in the light of HIV/AIDS. This research seeks to examine the contribution of traditional initiation

schools to adolescent's sexuality and how that links to their sexual and reproductive behaviour. The literature on traditional initiation schools is very limited. There is an urgent need for more research on traditional initiation schools and thus this research is an attempt to further the understanding of these schools and add to the literature on traditional initiation schools. This gap in literature kindled my own interest in the topic for the purposes of documenting these experiences.

On the ground, the area of study is of particular interest to Venda people living in the Limpopo province where traditional initiations are widely practiced. Moreover, there is a growing perception that adolescent's reproductive health is being neglected, particularly in developing countries (Murray and Lopez, 1996; Bhatia and Cleland, 2001). This study hopes to unpack this practice by focusing specifically on adolescent's sexuality and reproductive health. The improvement of the reproductive health of adolescents is now a major international priority, particularly in the face of high levels of HIV infection.

1.6. Aim of the Research

The overarching objective of the study is to examine the role of traditional initiation in influencing adolescent's sexuality and reproductive health. The specific objectives are to:

- To examine the definition of traditional initiation schools;
- To determine some of the methods used in recruiting young people;
- To explore the main themes covered in traditional initiation schools;
- To ascertain the attitudes of adolescents towards traditional initiations schools; and
- To determine the impact of traditional initiation schools on sexuality and reproductive health.

1.7. Methodology

The research was conducted in three villages in the north of the Limpopo Province; namely, Mulenzhe, Khakhanwa and Dididi. The study relies primarily on qualitative

data, which was obtained through in-depth interviews with adolescents attending traditional initiation schools. The qualitative method was found to be appropriate for this study as it provided detailed insights into the personal and private experiences of adolescents attending traditional initiation schools. Furthermore, qualitative methods are useful for providing an understanding of the meaning and context of behaviours and the processes that take place within social relationships (Brennan, 1992) and provide an opportunity for exploring in more detail complex and sensitive issues.

1.8. Organisation of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This first chapter provides a brief introduction. It is followed by a literature review of traditional initiation schools. In chapter three the conceptual framework of the study is outlined. Chapter four focuses on the methodology used in this study. The findings of the research are presented in chapter five. Chapter six discusses the main findings of this research drawing on particular themes. Finally, the dissertation ends with a discussion of the results and recommendations for future research and action.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the different types of traditional initiation schools. The first part gives a brief background of traditional initiation schools in South Africa and then looks at traditional initiation schools in other African countries and also in other parts of the world.

2.2. Background on Traditional Initiation Schools

In South Africa, different tribes observe different ritual ceremonies for young people. Among all these different (tribal) groups, there are the Venda people. According to Reily and Weinstock (1998) Venda people have a history of practicing initiations for young people. Van Gennep (1998) defined initiation as a “a dramatic passage from one status to another with a preliminal rite of separation, a liminal stage of isolation from profane life and a post-liminal rite of aggregating the initiate to a new status and social environment”. According to Arthen (2003), traditional initiation schools show a tribe’s acknowledgement that a young man or woman has reached the age of responsibility, fertility, and community productivity. It is believed that these schools make an indelible impression on the participant and as a result, are likely to influence future behaviour. In addition, these schools inform and educate young people as well as prepare them for their new roles in society. However, these schools are only attended at particular times of the year.

Traditional initiation schools in Venda form part of the rites of passage to adulthood. Arnold Van Gennep (2002) coined the term "rite of passage" and defined them as rites which accompany any change in social status, age, place, or life cycle stage like birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Traditionally, both young males and females in Venda were expected to attend these schools. Attendance at traditional initiations was compulsory for young people. Since the 1960s, however, some communities have

made attendance of traditional initiations optional to young people (Blacking, 1998). However, in some parts of Venda, it is still compulsory for young people to attend the traditional initiation schools.

In some African cultures in South Africa initiation involves the isolation of the initiate. The initiates are usually removed from their place of residence and taken to a place where they would not be disturbed by friends. Some traditional initiations involve mutilation: scarring, piercing of body parts, and tattooing, which are all supposed to be endured in silence (Brown, 1963). Others revolve around survival: beating, rigorous fasting, trials of pain and seclusion. According to Driver (1969), one tribe sequestered their young women for a full year. The seclusion allows young men and women to remove themselves from daily tasks and contemplate their new status (Ibid).

In addition, there were initiations surrounding the imposition and removal of taboos, such as homosexuality mysteries, specific dietary laws, and even specific speech restrictions. These initiations provided a structure within which young people worked, thus, providing specific instructions on how to learn vital aspects of life. For example, in some societies when one is still a child, he or she may be allowed to interact with people of the opposite sex but when he/she becomes an adult a wide array of boundaries are socially constructed. This normally applies to young women when they reach puberty. While these kinds of initiations cover a gamut of areas such as courtship, relationships and spirituality and they also prescribe and stipulate appropriate conduct. Common to some of the initiation schools is the use of ritual paint, special clothing, a new name, and specific instructions from the elders about sacred law, daily life and tribal legends. Subjects such as honour, loyalty, respect, and how these schools might be maintained or breached are shared.

The following section discusses the practice of traditional initiation schools in South Africa. The first segment looks at the types and practice of initiation schools among young Venda women and men. The Pondo traditional initiation practice in the Eastern Cape is also dealt with in the second segment.

2.3. Traditional Initiation Schools in Venda

Since Venda adolescents are the main subjects of this study, this reviews briefly explores traditional initiation schools in Venda. There are three well known initiation schools for girls in Venda. These are Vhusha, Tshikanda and Domba. *Vhusha* is the first phase in the initiation process. Traditionally, Venda girls attend *Vhusha* shortly after the onset of puberty. According to Blacking (1998) *Vhusha* used to be conducted in different seasons. This was largely due to the fact that girls did not attend modern schooling. It was thought that modern schooling affected the mental faculties of girls. It is not surprising; therefore, that modern schooling was not a high priority for girls. However, at the beginning of the 1950s some families started allowing girl children to attend modern schools (Blacking 1998). Attendance at these schools affected the way *Vhusha* was conducted. *Vhusha* is usually held several times in a year at the headman's place or the chief's place (Blacking 1998). The other traditional initiation schools -Tshikanda and Domba - are held less frequently, usually only in three to five years intervals at the chief's place and certain senior headman's place. Girls from several districts attended these traditional initiation schools.

Blacking (1998) further indicates that there is *u I mbela ha vhatendi*. This is a variant of the original traditional school in that it is a blend of the traditional initiation schooling method and Christian ethics. Blacking (1998) argues that this type of initiation is similar to *Vhusha*. For example it forbade the use of vulgar words and songs during initiation. However, it is different from *Vhusha* in that the Bible is used as a medium of instruction. However there is no difference in terms of duration of schooling between *u I mbela ha vhatendi* and *Vhusha*.

In South Africa the initiation of boys is very common among many certain ethnic groups. Amongst Venda people, initiation schools for boys are called *Murundu* (Maqubela, 2002). In Venda, the traditional initiation of young men usually lasts for a period of three months which is often spent in the bush. The bush is meant to isolate the initiate from the world of women. The process of initiation involves circumcision. Male circumcision is associated with the transition from childhood to manhood. Boys in this case are transformed through the circumcision of their penis. It is believed that the removal of a foreskin results in the sharpening of the warrior's spear. The spear

refers to the penis, which is supposed to be used to strike the elephant (Milubi 2000). The elephant here refers to the woman. According to Milubi (2000), the initiation process socialises men to believe that women are their sexual objects. This is clear in the songs used by men attending traditional initiation schools. This is also illustrated by the reference to women's private parts as sexual objects in most of the songs used by initiates during the initiation process (Ibid).

The above section showed traditional initiation types in Venda. The following sections look at traditional initiation schools in other parts South Africa.

2.4. Traditional Initiation Schools in Other Parts of South Africa

Pondo people are found in Port Elizabeth of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Girls attend traditional initiation schools soon after the onset of puberty. In the Pondo tribe, girls are sheltered in a private place usually to avoid contact with other people. The most preferred place for seclusion was at her father's hut in which she is kept for a period of three months. This was done in order to make sure that the girl is fattened and her complexion treated in order to enable her to be a good-looking wife (Naki, 2004). Historically, this practice of initiation was compulsory for all girls. Girls were usually married soon after the initiation process. In most case, this was usually at the age of sixteen or eighteen (Ibid). During the period of seclusion, the girl's family is usually approached by other families with offers of marriage proposals. After some agreement about the payment of lobola has been reached with the chosen family, the girl then prepares to leave her family. The practice of paying cattle is known as lobola. Lobola is a form of bride-wealth, an economic exchange joining two families as well as the transfer of rights over the labour and potential childbearing capacity of the woman (Kaufman *et al*, 2001). Historically, the payment of lobola used to involve an exchange of property such as cows and clothes. This has now changed to the exchange of cash which some people consider to be very expensive (Ibid). Nowadays, lobola payments are also determined by the educational level of a woman. The higher a woman's educational level, the higher the price of the lobola. However, it has been estimated that since the 1950s there has been a steady decline in the number of girls attending traditional initiation schools largely as a result of the increase in attendance at modern schools.

In the Eastern Cape Province the AmaBhaca, amaXhosa and amaHlubi tribes also practice male initiations (Ngaloshe, 2000). The initiation processes of all the tribes have certain common features. The process of initiation involves three stages: separation, transition and incorporation (Van Gennep, 2002). The main purpose of the initiation process is to transform boys from dependency on women to the world of men. In the circumstance, women are considered to be too soft, a quality which is considered not good for a man. Xhosa adult men gather together in the mountains or hills during the initiation process and are given instructions by the elders. These elders are considered to have something to teach young people. These may include certain skills such as dances, stories, magic, visions and rituals. Boys are also taught what it means to be a 'man'. They are also shown sacred places and objects which are usually located in isolated areas. The process of becoming an adult does not simply unfold (Ngaloshe, 2000). Adults usually pave the way for youth to join their ranks. It is believed that without proper guidance from adults the journey of adolescents is not going to be smooth and as a result, often adolescents become restless and wreak havoc in their communities (Ngaloshe, 2000).

The initiation of boys is widely practiced in a number of ethnic groups. However, it is practiced differently in different tribes, traditions, cultures and religions. The initiation of boys worldwide involves two main aspects: the circumcision of the boy's foreskin and the training of boys to enter manhood. This practice has been in existence since the beginning of history. For Christians, it started during the Biblical times when God conveyed this message to Abraham: "as for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendents after you through their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendents after you: every male among you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male through out your generation" (Genesis 17: 9). Circumcision was seen as compulsory for boys following the Christian. As suggested by the quotation, the practice was not supposed to end among Christians. The main purpose of the practice was to remember and re-enact the covenant between God and Abraham (Pollock, 2002: 146).

Furthermore, circumcision is widely practiced among Muslims and Jews. According to Funani (1990), this practice has profound religious significance. If a boy reaches a particular age without having been circumcised, the boy may not be fully accepted in the religion. However, circumcision has also been conducted for non-religious purposes. Some argue that circumcision prevents masturbation, which causes blindness and/or insanity. Initially, it was also advocated as a cure to prevent alcoholism, asthma, hernia and, in some cases headaches. Since the turn of the century, other reasons have been given to perpetuate the practice: hygiene, avoidance of sexually transmitted infections, prevention of penile and cervical cancer, protection against urinary tract infections in infancy, and decreasing the risk of HIV infection (Smith, 1998).

2.5 Initiations in Other African Countries

Lesotho is an enclave of South Africa with a total population of 1,865,040 (CIA, 2004). Almost 99.7% of the population belong to the Sotho ethnic group (Mturi, 2001). In Lesotho there are traditional initiation schools that are frequently attended by Basotho young men and women during their adolescence or early 20s. In Lesotho, Basotho adolescents are expected to attend initiation schools as a rite of passage into adulthood (Mturi and Hennink, 2005). However, due to the emergence of modern schools in Lesotho attendance at traditional initiation schools has declined. The primary aim of the schools was to prepare young people for adult responsibility. Traditional initiation schools provide young people with 'information about family life', 'responsibility', 'sexual relations' and 'reproductive health matter' (Mturi and Hennink, 2005). In their study in Lesotho, Mturi and Hennink (2005) found that parents were deterred from discussing sexual matters with their children by socio-cultural taboos. The schools were expected to raise awareness among young people on issues or experiences they would face as adults in their future. However, some of these schools no longer exist in some parts of Lesotho. Young people in the rural areas are more likely to attend both modern and traditional schools. In the urban areas of Lesotho, the situation is different. Some of the young people do not even know if traditional initiation schools exist (Mturi, 2001).

In some parts of Africa, such as Zambia, initiation schools for girls are very different. Zambia is in Southern Africa, east of Angola. In Zambia there are seven major sub-cultural groups who speak the vernacular languages. The subgroups are Bemba, Kaonda, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja and Tonga (CIA, 2004). The Bemba people in Zambia originated from the Kola region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire), and are an offshoot of the ancient Luba empire (Kashoki, 2000). The Bemba girls are expected to attend initiation schools before they marry. The initiation process of Bemba girls is similar to the initiation process of Venda girls. Culturally, when a Bemba girl reaches puberty, she usually informs an older woman and then she is isolated from society for a few days and waits until the *Chisungu* ceremony is performed (Richards, 1932). The *Chisungu* is usually performed after the announcement of her engagement and prior to the marriage ceremony. The future bridegroom has a role to play or is represented by his sister. The father of the girl provides a hut that will be the *Chisungu* hut for the duration of the ceremony (Ibid). *Chisungu* takes place during the winter and summer holidays. Noteworthy is the fact that this was not the case in the olden days. The change in terms of time period was done so that girls can also attend modern schools (Rasing, 2002). As a reflection of the dynamism in the practice, Catholic women in church now operate initiation schools for girls in Zambia (Rasing, 2002).

Kenya is situated in Eastern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean, between Somalia and Tanzania. In Kenya there are different ethnic groups such as Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba, Kisii, and Meru. Among these ethnic groups and especially those living in the rural areas, the initiation of girls is the most important aspect of adulthood transformation (Molloy, 1999). There are three different types of initiations that are practiced in some parts of Kenya. These initiations usually involve some form of genital mutilation. According to Smith (2005), female genital mutilation (also referred to as female circumcision) involves the cutting, or partial or total removal, of the external female genitalia for cultural, religious, or other non-medical reasons. This practice is mainly performed on girls between the ages of four and 10 (Ibid). Type I (commonly referred to as clitoridectomy), Type II (commonly referred to as excision) and Type III (commonly referred to as infibulations) are the three forms of female genital mutilation that are practiced to varying degrees in Kenya (Bureau of Public Affairs, 2001). In Kenya, clitoridectomy and excision are the commonly practiced.

Infibulations are usually performed in the far eastern areas bordering Somalia. Studies indicate that it is practiced mostly in rural areas, especially among those that have lower educational levels and/or subscribe to non-Christian faiths (McCall, 1995; Molloy, 1999; Welsh, 1995). The main aim for this practice is for social and cultural control of women's sexuality by removing the most sensitive parts of their sexual organs (Smith, 2005). Female genital mutilations are also practiced by some Christians and Ethiopian Jews who now live in Israel (Maina-Ahlberg, 1998). This practice is seen as integral to a girl's maturation. The initiation includes instruction about sexuality, sexual relations with husbands, pregnancy, behaviour and the importance of marrying outside the clan. This is usually the only formal instruction a girl receives (Maina-Ahlberg, 1998).

Another country in Africa where traditional initiation schools are relatively common is Ghana. Ghana is in Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo (CIA, 2004). This country has several tribes such as Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe, Ga, Gurma and Yoruba (CIA, 2004). The Akan tribe hold traditional initiations for girls. Girls are expected to be purified and dignified by traditional ceremonies that are performed at traditional initiation schools. Girls in these cultures are isolated soon after they enter puberty. They usually spend a period of two to three weeks in isolation. During this period of isolation young women are given lessons to make the transition to adulthood which include sex education, birth control, how to relate to men and how to maintain a good marriage (Osei-Adu, 1990). In the Akan tribe there is a strong emphasis on virginity and girls are expected to remain virgins at least until they attend traditional initiation schools. These laws and regulations are to ensure that young women reach adulthood with discipline. Traditionally, girls of this subgroup were not supposed to marry without first going through the process of initiation. It is believed that all women who go through the process of initiation will marry soon after they complete the initiation (Osei-Adu, 1990).

Girls also attend traditional initiation schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo (previously known as Zaire). In the northeast corner of Democratic Republic of Congo in central Africa the tribe called BaMbuti considers the girl's first menstrual period as the most special gift in life. The initiation which is called "elima" is usually performed soon after she reaches puberty. The girl is secluded for the period of one or

two months depending on the progress made during the process of initiation. During the initiation process the girl is trained by adult relatives to be a good mother. When the initiation process is over the girl is then considered to be ready for marriage and is believed to be entering the world of adults with all its responsibilities (Danielle, 1999). The completion of the initiation process qualifies a girl for marriage.

Young men in the BaMbuti tribe also attend traditional initiation schools. They usually attend initiation schools between the ages of 13 to 17 years. These young men are usually secluded from members of their village for a period of up to one year. Everything that they are taught in the initiation schools is usually kept a secret. However, this information is thought to be necessary for them to take on the responsibilities of men in society. They are taught to assume the responsibilities of men in their society and to play a productive role in the village as well (Danielle, 1999).

In summary, we have seen that initiation schools in some of the African countries play a vital role in the preparation of young women for adulthood. It is important to note that countries that prioritize the practice of initiation schools seem to have common goals such as training young women to be good wives and mothers as well as to be dignified and responsible women. In some cultures, girls usually attend initiation schools after reaching puberty in a process often involving some seclusion where girls are given information about sexual relations and reproductive health. However, there are also some marked differences between traditional initiation schools as practiced in various countries. For example, female genital mutilation is practiced in some parts of Kenya. The duration of traditional initiation schools process also differs from country to country. In some countries young men and women attend traditional initiation schools for shorter periods while in other countries it may be for longer periods.

2.6. European Initiation Practice

Initiations are also performed in some parts of Europe as in the case of Greece. Greece is in Southern Europe, bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, between Albania and Turkey (CIA, 2004). This country does not

have ethnic divisions or groups (Ibid). The rite of passage in Greece was a ritual that allows a group or an individual to move from one status to another in a society (Dowden, 1989). One of the most common initiations in Greece occurs prior to marriage. Traditionally, Greek girls were expected to select their partners or enter marriage soon after entering puberty. However, modernization has brought changes to this practice. When a girl enters puberty, instead of getting married she is now expected to further her studies (Ibid). As part of the initiation process, the girl is expected to shave her head at the time of her marriage to indicate the transition from one stage to the next. This often marked the change from childhood to adulthood (Ibid).

2.7. Latin American Initiation Practices

In Peru there is a tribe called Campa that has traditional initiations for girls. Peru is found in Western South America, bordering the South Pacific Ocean, between Chile and Ecuador (CIA, 2004). Young girls are usually isolated for a period of one month in a private house and they are not allowed to be seen by members of their community. During the time of seclusion, the initiates are not allowed to leave this place for a few weeks. In this tribe the ceremonial feast is held in the girl's honour (Needham Organisation, 2004). The initiation process is used to prepare girls for marriage and childbirth. This type of initiation is done before the Campa girl is to be married. As a way of initiating "a girl's face is distorted by large masses of chewed yucca which is kept in their cheeks. Then they spit it out into a wooden trough. In the warmth of the forest, fermentation occurs rapidly, and within twenty-four hours, water is mixed into form a thick white creamy liquid" (Needham Organisation, 2004). Girls who complete the initiation process are usually seen as adults and capable of being someone's wife. Only after completing the initiation process are girls allowed to marry.

Historically, almost every Western Apache girl has undergone a puberty ceremony, or *na'ii'ees* known popularly as the Sunrise Dance. However, this practice is currently no longer performed as it used to be in the 1950s. The Apache Sunrise Ceremony is a gruelling communal four-day ceremony that girls undergo after the onset of puberty. Through several sacred ceremonies, dances, songs, and enactments, the girls become

instilled with the physical and spiritual power of White Painted Woman, as they embrace their role as women of the Apache nation (Driver, 1972). Mandy (2003) indicated that most Apache women who have been to the Sunrise Ceremony felt that the ceremony significantly increased their self-esteem and confidence. In addition, some stated that at the end of the ceremony they felt mature meaning that the ceremony made them feel as if they were real women (Mandy, 2003). Although puberty ceremonies continue to be performed on a regular basis, some Apache young women no longer attend traditional initiation schools. Two reasons for this decline are apparent. First, as a result of inroads made by missionaries, some Apaches no longer believe in the Sundance ceremony. Second reasons are expenses involved. The amount of money and work required is staggering and this makes the ceremony unaffordable for most people.

In the Caribs, the Maroni River Caribs girls have their initiation between the ages of eight and nineteen (Jarvie and Kloos, 1969). These initiation rites conform to what Brown (1963 cited in Jarvie and Kloos 1969: 900) defined as “ceremonial events, mandatory for all girls”. Just like other ceremonies in other cultures, the Caribs experience the initiation rites after their first menstrual periods. When the parents of the girl discover that she has entered puberty, they create a spare room for her. The main reason for creating a separate room for the girl is that she is supposed to be isolated and not to be seen by her siblings until the initiation process has been completed. The Caribs initiation schools share similar characteristics with other initiation schools. A girl is isolated from other people for approximately eight days. However, with the Caribs the reasons for isolation are different from any other initiation school. In the Caribs tradition it is believed that the girl’s first menstruation makes her smell. The seclusion is done to prevent a girl from going to the river. It is believed the river cannot tolerate the smell of a woman who is experiencing her menstrual cycle. During the period of eight days girls are warned not to ever go next to the river when she is experiencing her menstrual cycle (Kloos, 1969).

In some tribes in Brazil women undergo the initiation process during the puberty stage. Brazil is in Eastern South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. The initiations in Brazil are considered to be their rites of passage. The two cultural groups -Tupinamba and Urubu-Kaapor- initiate girls one month prior to the onset of puberty.

It is not clear how they manage to estimate the period of the girls first menstrual period. The process of initiation among the Tupinamba involves the cutting of the girl's hair using a fish tooth. The Fish tooth which was considered to have high precision. In addition, the girls are also scratched on their back with an animal bone. The scratching is expected to be very painful and the girl was expected to bleed. If the girl took long to start bleeding, the elders then made deep cuts to ensure that bleeding occurs as fast as possible (Kakumasu, 1980).

The process of initiation among the Urubu-Kaapor took a slightly different form. During the initiation process, the hair of the girl is cut and she is required to follow a restricted diet. The cutting of hair is regarded as cleansing the person from all the evil things that might happen in future. Unlike the Tupinambas, the initiation process among the Urubu-Kaapor involves the girl's father putting large ants into the binders to make her feel pain for a while until they are removed (Kakumasu, 1980). However, these initiations for girls among both groups of people have undergone change as development occurs in these areas. The Tupinambas no longer have these initiations for girls. The Urubu-Kaapor experienced minor changes in their practices due to natural environmental changes and the presence of competing societies such as the Portuguese (Ibid).

2.8. Summary

This chapter demonstrated that traditional initiations are practiced across many cultures throughout the world. However, due to the influence of modernization, this practice has been declining. There are some commonalities in the initiation processes. In most cases, young women are provided with crucial knowledge and skills on sexual activities, motherhood, reproductive health and responsibility. In South Africa, male circumcision is very common among certain cultural groups.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the most frequently used theories of behaviour change. It begins with five health behavioural change theories. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework proposed in this research.

3.2. Health Belief Model

The Health Belief Model was developed in the 1950s. It holds that health behaviour is a function of human socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge and attitudes (UNAIDS, 1999). This model is based on six concepts: perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to actions and self efficacy. When individuals believe that there are risks of contracting a particular condition, for example HIV, they are likely to change to responsible actions (DiClemente and Peterson, 1994). The perceived severity involves individuals believing a particular behaviour has serious conditions and consequences. Perceived benefits are to do with individuals' belief in the efficacy of the advised action to reduce risks or seriousness of impact (Ibid). Barriers are perceived when one believes in tangible and psychological costs of the advised behaviour. Self efficacy has to do with one's confidence about the ability to take action (UNAIDS, 1999).

The Health Belief model is a framework designed to motivate people to take positive health actions. The model uses negative impacts to campaign for positive change. Theorists believe that when individuals are presented with negative consequences of certain behaviour, it motivates them to change that behaviour. For example, in HIV campaigns, pictures of people suffering or dying of AIDS are used to warn other people against unprotected sex. Critical to this model is the avoidance of negative consequences (DiClemente and Peterson, 1994).

However, this model does not consider other aspects of human life that may contribute to behaviour change such as social and demographic background. This is because an individual's social and demographic background might play an enormous role in influencing their activities. Further, prior knowledge or experience of behaviour can also alter someone's perceptions (Furnham, 1993).

3.3. Trans-Theoretical Model

The trans-theoretical model was pioneered by Prochaska and DiClemente. This model was also named 'Stages of Change'. The model is widely accepted as a critical benchmark for determining individual's motivation for behaviour change. According to Prochaska and DiClemente (1982), health behaviour change involves progressing through six stages of change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. At the stage of pre-contemplation, an individual has not yet considered the benefits of lifestyle change. Contemplation involves considering change but not acting on this intention. The preparation stage is when an individual is ready to change the behaviour and preparing to act. The action stage is about making the initial steps toward behaviour change. The maintenance stage includes maintaining behaviour change while often experiencing relapses (Prochaska *et al*, 1995). Prochaska and DiClemente (1995) understood that at each of the six stages of change, an individual weighs the pros and cons of adopting a new behaviour. Despite the harmful side effects of an addictive substance or behaviour, giving up the euphoria of an addictive behaviour can be a lot to ask from some people. For most behavioural changes, the "sacrifices" are immediate, but the benefits are not. Prochaska and DiClemente call this weighing of pros and cons "decisional balance" (1982; 1102).

An inventive contribution of this model is its emphasis on maintaining change. The model recognizes that relapse is common in the recovery process. Instead of viewing relapse as a failure of behaviour change, the model uses it as an opportunity to teach the individual how to sustain change more effectively in future (Prochaska, 1999). The process of behaviour change may however occur at more than one stage. Therefore, the way in which these stages are differentiated is not clear. Some behaviour change processes may appear as if they were at a particular stage. This

might be because they are restraining movement to the next stage rather than being the most useful processes at that stage (Fallon and Hausenblas, 2004).

3.4. Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action was advanced by Ajzen and Fishbein in the 1960s. This theory assumes that attitude towards certain behaviours can influence behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). According to this theory, human beings make rational decisions and systematically make use of the information they receive. People in this case are believed to rationally weigh the benefits of their actions or behaviour before they act (Ajzen, 1996). The most important determinant of human behaviour is the behavioural intent. Attitude and subjective norm determines the individual's intentions to perform certain behaviour. General beliefs, evaluations of behavioural outcomes, subjective norms, normative beliefs and the individual's motivation are salient factors in informing certain behaviours.

The theory provides an assumption that human beings first rationally consider the behavioural outcomes before they perform certain behaviour. It is believed that behaviour that has positive outcomes provide high motivational factors towards a certain action, whereas behaviour with negative results has less motivation towards a similar action (Godin, 1996). In this case, human beings measure attitudes and subjective norm as 'good/bad', 'like/dislike' and 'agree/disagree'. These phrases normally lead people to value the outcomes of their intended behaviour.

Moreover, in situations where behaviour is not under an individual's full volitional control, the theory adopts the concept of perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1998). Perceived behaviour control refers to "the degree to which an individual feels that performance or non-performance of the behaviour in question is under his/her volitional control" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980: 5). It is believed that people are not likely to form a strong intention to perform certain behaviour if they believe that they do not have resources or opportunities to perform or succeed in that particular behaviour.

This theory raises crucial factors that influence human behaviour. However, it does not take into consideration personality, cultural factors and demographics that may also have an impact on behaviour intentions. It is not always the case that “perceived behaviour control” predicts behaviour in question.

3.5. Social Learning Theory

This theory was introduced by Bandura who argues that observation, modelling, attitudes and emotional reactions can influence an individual’s behaviour. Bandura further argues that human behaviour is learnt through observation. He warns that ‘children and adults acquire attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct through filmed and televised modelling’ (Bandura, 1977; 39). After observing behaviour being performed several times, people tend to shape their behaviour according to the observed behaviour (Bandura, 1977). He also believes that the highest level of observational learning can be achieved through organising and rehearsing modelled behaviour. Modelled behaviour is normally weighed to assess if the outcomes could be valued before a particular behaviour can be performed. In addition, individuals do not just adopt behaviour if the model is not admired or does not share any common interest with the observer (Bandura, 1997).

Some social learning theorists also believe that human behaviour may not necessarily change after observation alone. Behaviour may or may not change as a result of observing other people’s performance. Therefore, cognition plays a fundamental role in learning behaviour. Cognitive learning occurs at two levels – rote learning and problem solving. Rote memorisation occurs when people rehearse information until it gets lodged in their long term memory (Shelth and Mittal, 2004). This can result from active rehearsal or passive or repeated exposure to the information. Problem-solving occurs “when an individual is actively processing information weighing it, discounting some, combining and integrating disparate pieces of information to reach a certain judgement” (Shelth and Mittal, 2004:138). When human beings are aware of the benefits or punishment of certain behaviour, that awareness has major effects on the behaviour in question.

There are three factors that play an imperative role on individual's behaviour as a result of learnt or observed modelling such as self efficacy, self regulation, self instructions and self monitoring and self reinforcement (Bandura, 1997). Human beings are more likely to perform certain behaviours when they perceive themselves to be able to implement that behaviour effectively. This can only occur when an individual has high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). When individuals view behaviour as appropriate, they tend to make behavioural choices as a form of self-regulation (Ibid). Self-regulation also involves things like setting goals and standards, self observation, self judgement and self reaction. Self-guidance or instructions help individuals to guide themselves in order to achieve the goals and standards they have set for themselves (Bandura, 1997; 1986). Lastly, individuals can monitor their own behaviour through observing oneself (Ibid).

The main emphasis in this theory is that individuals learn behaviour through modelling and observation (Brewer and Wann, 1998). This may either be from television or any other form of media (Miller and Dollard, 1941; Bandura, 1997; 1977). It is true that modelling can influence human behaviour but this is not necessarily always the case. Some behaviour can be learnt involuntarily through cultural practices and peer pressure (Wells-Wilbon, 1994; Miller, 1983). Although behaviour can also be learnt from cultural beliefs and from peers, these two factors can also impede behaviour change.

3.6. Social Network Theory

The social network theory looks at behaviour at the societal not at the individual level. The way people relate to each other has a major influence on behaviour. One of the aims of social network theory is about understanding mappings connecting one individual to others; one can evaluate the social capital of that individual (Scott, 2000). "Social capital refers to the network position of the object or node and consists of the ability to draw on the resources contained by members of the network" (Lin, 1999). Social networks provide an extension of resources and exchange of ideas amongst individuals. In terms of behaviour change, one can make changes in the relationship or any other form of network depending on what behaviour is considered crucial for change. For an example, a young person with peers who do not believe in

safer sex can choose to sever ties with those peers and create new networks with positive health behaviour. Basically, the more mappings a person has in the social network and the more mappings these people have, the more knowledge, influence, and power the original person will control. Social capital can have a substantial influence on a person's life; affecting such aspects as living a positive lifestyle and transferring information to others. Social networks can also help human beings to identify primary groups and cliques on behaviour change. Social norms are also understood as the level of social networks (Scott, 2000).

In a society, social networks can be used in traditional or cultural practices that help transfer information to people. People can form a social network to provide knowledge to young people, for example, on some of the experiences of life. This kind of knowledge can also be transferred through family systems and peer groups. Depending on what one takes as useful or crucial, information transferred through social networks can play a role in changing attitudes and perceptions about certain behaviours.

3.7. Critiques of the Above Theories

There are a number of theories to explain change in behaviour. However, some of these theories have come under heavy criticism for not taking into account others factors as environmental or economic context that may influence health behaviours. In addition, some of the models proposed do not incorporate the influence of social norms and peer influences on individual's decisions regarding health behaviours. In some cases, the socio-cultural environment may influence or limit the ability of an individual to take action for change. For example, women who are concerned about the risk of HIV infection may not be able to protect themselves because of their economic dependency on their partners. Moreover, the main focus of these theories is on the individual. It does not examine the role of structural and environmental factors which may influence behaviour.

3.8. Proposed Conceptual Model

This section provides the proposed conceptual framework for the study. The model integrates theories discussed above and suggests additional factors that are important for behavioural change.

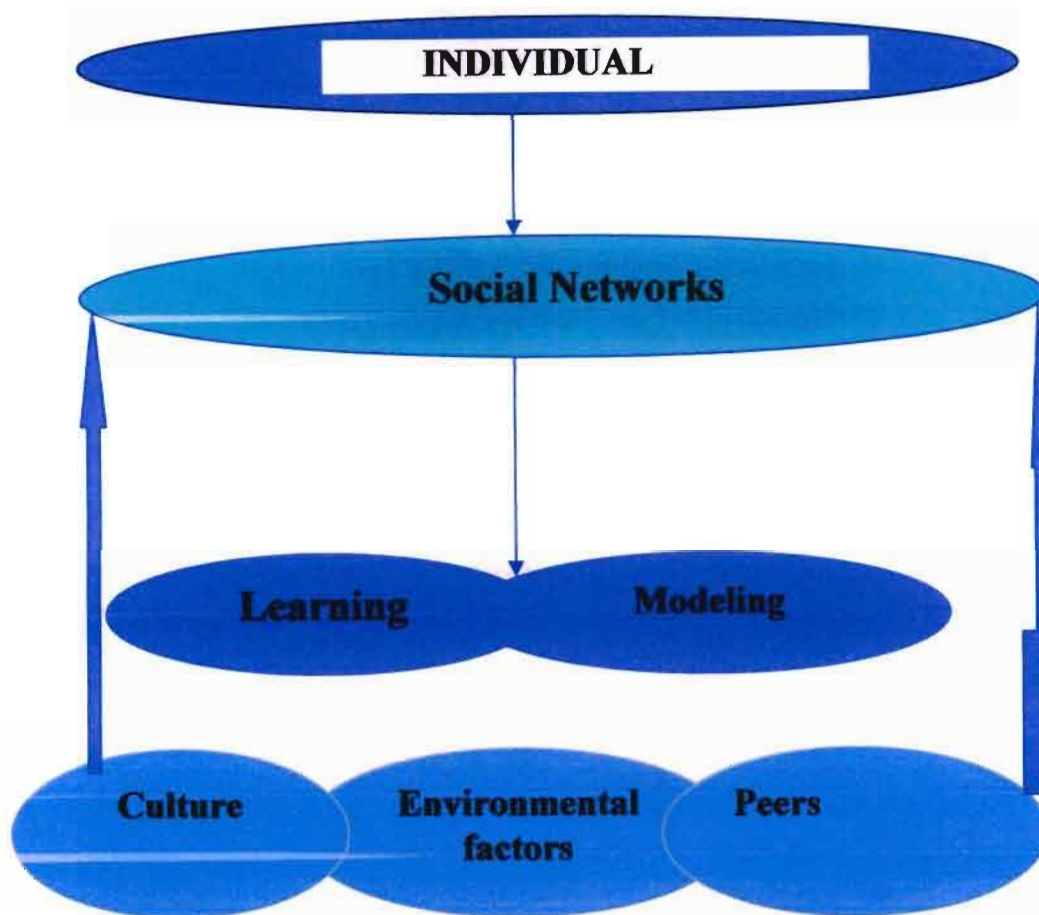


Figure 1: Composite Model

The complexity of human behaviour is difficult to capture in a single theory. The above diagram attempts to take into account various factors that impact on behaviour. As shown, individuals create social networks that help transfer information to individuals. These social networks, to some extent, have an influence on human behaviour. The process of learning occurs as a result of observing others and the consequences of their action. Thus, the individual may model his/her behaviour accordingly based on observation. These learning mechanisms are in turn affected by

cultural and environmental factors and this may include the influence of peers. Culture may be defined as “the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (Moore, 1953). Culture influences human behaviour, even though it seldom enters into their conscious thought. People depend on culture because it gives them stability, security and the ability to respond to a given situation.

In this research, combinations of these theories are used to understand the behaviour of young men and women attending initiation schools. The researcher does not stick to one theory to account for behaviour change given the limitations of the theories.

3.9. Conclusion

Human behaviour cannot be explained by only one particular theory. Behaviour change may occur when negative impacts of certain behaviours are used to dissuade negative behaviour while encouraging positive health behaviour. This can be achieved by giving space to individuals to change their own attitudes and perceptions to certain behaviours. The way individuals behave may also have to do with the social networks they engage and context in which they live. It is argued that through observation individuals are able to rationalise and choose the appropriate behaviour. Thus, social networks are especially important for individuals since they determine an individual's status in society. Studies also show that it is possible to change the behaviour of an individual using the information obtained from social networks (Sabater and Sierra, 2002; Boudourides, 2002).

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the context of the study. A brief socio-demographic profile of the Limpopo Province is provided. The study uses the qualitative approach and this chapter looks at the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. In-depth interviews were used to collect data on traditional initiation schools. This chapter describes the process of data collection and also, the methods of data analysis.

4.2. Background

4.2.1. *Profile of the Limpopo Province*

This study was conducted in the Limpopo Province. In 2001, the total population size of the Limpopo province was 5.8 million (Statsasa, 2003). Limpopo covers 123 910 square kilometres. The province has a relatively low level of industrialization with almost 86% of its population living in rural areas. The majority of the population of the Limpopo province is African. The main languages are Sepedi, Xitsongo and Tshivenda. Limpopo has a higher proportion of women (54.3%) against 45.7 for men partly attributable to the fact that men often leave the province in search of employment opportunities. There are a large number of people in the Limpopo province that have no formal school. In 1996, the literacy rate of people aged 20 years old and older was estimated to be 63% (Statistics South Africa, 2003). Unemployment in the province is very high. According to the population census of 1996, 46% of the population of Limpopo province were not currently employed (Statistics South Africa, 2003). In 2004, the level of HIV prevalence among antenatal clinic attendees in Limpopo Province was 19% (Department of Health, 2005). Limpopo has the third lowest levels of HIV prevalence in South Africa. However, Avert Organization (2005) argues that due to the increase of poverty in Limpopo, the HIV prevalence rate is expected to increase. Limpopo is also considered to be one of the poorest provinces in South Africa.

4.2.2. *Venda*

Venda is the land of the Vhavenda and is one of the former South African homelands. It is situated in the far north of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Venda is situated in the interior of Southern Africa between the latitudes 22°15' and 23°45' south and longitudes 29°50' and 31°30' east (Benso, 1979). Venda is situated close to the Limpopo River, which borders Zimbabwe. On the east part of Venda there is the Levubu River, which borders the Kruger National Park, and on the southeast, there is the former homeland of Gazankulu. The total area of Venda is 6 500 km² (2 500 square miles) (Benso, 1979). The Soutpansberg mountain range, which runs through the central and southern part in an east-westerly direction, divides the area into three distinct geographical regions: Limpopo Valley, Soutpansberg and the Pietersburg Highland. Venda has high temperatures and humidity in summer with winter temperatures which are warm (Benso, 1979; Thulamela, 2005).

Venda consists of a multiplicity of tribal units, each with its own culture and traditions. Amongst all these tribal groups are the Vhasenzi, Vhalemba, Vhatavhatsindi, Vhambedzi, Vhangona, Vhanyai, Vhalea, Vhafamadi, Vhaluvhu, Vhatwamamba, Vhazhelele and Vhangoni. Each of these groups is further divided into sub-groups such as Vhasenzi into the Vhadalamo, Masingo and Vhalaudzi (Benso, 1979). The origins of Vhavenda people can be traced to the 18th century. It is thought that they migrated south, crossing the Limpopo River from Zimbabwe (Singita, 2004). These people settled next to the Soutpansberg Mountain Range in the Limpopo Province. The area has a variety of mountains, astonishing hills and forests. They therefore, named that particular mountain range, Venda (which means a pleasant place) (Ibid). This is why the tribe was named Vhavenda because it was perceived to be pleasant.

Venda was established as a self-governing Territory in 1973 by virtue of the National States Constitution Act (21) of 1971. Venda was granted its independence by the former Republic of South Africa through the status of Venda Act (107) of 1979 (Thulamela, 2005). During its independence, Venda was dependent on the former

Republic of South Africa economically (Schutte, 1984). Thohoyandou is a former capital of Venda. This is small town under the Thulamela municipality.

As earlier mentioned, the research was conducted in three villages in Venda: Mulenzhe, Khakhanwa and Dididi villages. These villages are found in the far north of Limpopo Province. All these villages are under the leadership of chief Vho-Nkhaneni Ramovha. Mulenzhe village is primarily under the leadership of the chief himself. The headman named Vho-Phaphuli primarily leads Khakhanwa. Vho-Phaphuli reports all the activities in this village to the chief who is based in Mulenzhe village. The last village Dididi is under the headman Vho-Maduvha Ramovha. These headmen seek authorisation to handle most activities in the villages from the chief Vho-Nkhaneni Ramovha.

4.3. Qualitative Research

This research relied on qualitative data collection methods. According to Welman and Kruger (2003: 178) qualitative research can be defined as a type of research involving the interpretation of non-numerical data. Qualitative research is an inductive approach which results in generation of new hypotheses and theories (Babbie and Mouton, 2001, 270). The main purpose of conducting qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to describe multiple realities. In addition, qualitative research helps a researcher to develop a deep understanding of the subject matter.

4.3.1. Advantages of Using Qualitative Research

There are several advantages of qualitative research. Qualitative research provides detailed insights into a particular phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This makes it possible for a researcher to interrogate the respondents and they therefore, provide a finer level of detailed information. Qualitative research also makes it possible for a researcher to ask such questions as why and how. Respondents in this case, try to answer questions such as why and how things happened or why are they the way they are.

Again, “it provides ways of transcribing and analysing the discursive construction of everyday events, of examining the consequential nature of learning within and across events, and exploring the historical nature of life within a social group or local setting” (Putney and Green, 1999). Forms of historical research may include determining trends that have occurred over the past several years in a certain group of people. Once the researcher has the transcripts printed in hardcopy form, the researcher can begin to analyze the data, using traditional analytical procedures that are appropriate given the research design and the purpose of the study. Alternatively, the researcher may import the transcript files to a qualitative data analysis software package for analysis. The software is useful in organizing and managing qualitative data.

Moreover, qualitative research gives a more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; 270). Qualitative research expands the range of knowledge and understanding of the world beyond the researchers themselves. It often helps researchers to see why some things are the way are, rather than just presenting a phenomenon. It also helps the researcher to be identified as the main instrument in the research process (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Certain research questions can be more fully answered and explored with certain quantitative methods such as those investigating beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of people. Qualitative research also allows respondents of the study to express their feelings and offer their perspectives in their own words (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

4.3.2. Disadvantages of Using Qualitative Research

While the above discussion gave a brief description of the advantages of using qualitative research, this approach also has its own limitations. The following discussion presents some of the limitations of using qualitative research. In a qualitative research, there is some concern about generalisability especially if the researcher is “working” with a small group of people. It may therefore not be possible to make generalisation from the results. Given the fact that qualitative research focuses on depth, the researcher is likely to spend more time in the field. This kind of scenario may be costly for the researcher. Furthermore, Peck and Secker (1999) argue that qualitative research is time consuming in terms of data collection and data

analysis. A large amount of data is collected and as a result, it may take a long time to analyse the data. Sometimes the process may take much longer than the researcher expected and unanticipated costs may arise during the data collection process.

In qualitative research, if the researcher is focusing on a small group of people, the results of the research are likely to be valid for those people only. As such, it may not be easy and feasible to make generalisation from the results to cover a whole population. Given the fact that qualitative research focuses on depth, the researcher is likely to spend more time in the field. This kind of scenario may be costly on the researcher's side (Peck and Secker, 1999).

4.4. Interviews

In this study open-ended interviews were used during the data collection process. This researcher was particularly interested in detailed, in-depth data on traditional initiation schools. The researcher started by conducting extensive interviews, searching documents and articles on traditional initiation schools. Patton (2001) defined interviews as open-ended questions and probes that give way to in-depth responses of the participant's perceptions, practices, beliefs, feelings and knowledge. In this particular research, interviews allowed the interviewer to rephrase questions to elicit rich, descriptive responses.

Interviews were the best method to be used in this case because of the sensitivity of the topic under study, traditional initiation schools and sexuality. In traditional initiation schools there are traditional ethics which must be observed. Disobedience even in carrying out this study, would lead to conflicts with the local traditional leaders. Moreover, issues that affect sexuality and reproductive health may be too sensitive for one to disclose in front of several people especially in the case where focus group discussions are used as a method of data collection. The researcher, therefore, decided to conduct one on one interviews. As such, it was just the interviewer and the respondent and in the male case: There was a note taker of which respondents were informed about his presence during the course of the interview.

In addition, key informants were used as a tool to gather additional information. Key informants in this particular study were the traditional initiation schools' facilitators. These people were interviewed to get information about the contents of their schools and the behaviour of students or participants in the schools.

Secondary data was used as an important part of data collection as newspaper reports of traditional initiation schools and HIV/AIDS were examined. Local and international publications, journals and documents some of which have not yet been published were also be used as secondary sources for the study. Furthermore, the web-journals were used to get information about some of the international experiences.

4.5. Process of Data Collection

The following section deals with the whole process of data collection such as problems faced during field work.

4.5.1 Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers such as the chief and headmen were asked to help in identifying suitable respondents for the study. According to Hawkins and Tull (1998), gatekeepers are those people in control of the flow of information. The gatekeeper can choose to accept or reject a piece of information for public consumption. In this research, gatekeepers included the chief, headmen and youth sports leaders who were asked to help in recruiting respondents for the study. Gatekeepers are the people who have control over the flow of information, specifically adolescents who had attended traditional initiation schools.

4.5.2 Problems Encountered

There were a few problems experienced during the data collection process. Some of the respondents who consented to participate in the study changed their minds on the day of interview. This was problematic since the researcher had to wait at the agreed time and venue without an alternative respondent. In some cases, respondents arrived

for the appointment but were no longer willing to participate in the study. Men were more likely to have changed their minds about participating in the study. Some respondents also agreed to participate in the study but refused to answer some questions because they felt that they were not supposed to disclose information about traditional initiation schools. This created some unevenness in the data. The researcher of the study was female and females are not allowed to interview male respondents due to cultural taboos. This worked as a huge disadvantage because there was some crucial issues raised by respondents during the interviews that the researcher would have liked to have probed in more detail. Also, some issues could have been clarified in the interviews if the researcher was allowed to probe responses.

4.5.3. *Sampling method*

During the selection and recruitment of participants the researcher ensured the appropriateness of the sampling method. This means that the researcher considered characteristics of the target population making sure that they were suitable for the purpose of the study. In order to be eligible for the interview, young men and women had to have attended a traditional initiation school. They also had to be residing in one of the three villages in which the study was conducted. The study used purposive convenience sampling to recruit respondents.

The purposive or judgmental sampling was used due to the fact that respondents required for the study should have the required characteristics. A purposive sample is one which is selected by the researcher subjectively. The researcher attempts to obtain a sample that appears to him/her to be representative of the population and will usually try to ensure that a range from one extreme to the other is included (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; 166-67). Gatekeepers such as the chief, headmen and youth sports leaders were asked to help in identifying suitable respondents for the study.

In total, 34 interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted with young men and women who had attended traditional initiation schools. An attempt was made to ensure an equal distribution of men and women. As a result, in each of the three villages of the study, interviews were conducted with 5 males and 5 females. Thus, in total 15 females and 15 males participated in the survey from the cohort of initiates.

Interviews were also conducted with facilitators of traditional initiation schools. Four facilitators were interviewed: two males and two females.

4.6. Data collection

Since the three villages in which the study was conducted are under the leadership of Chief Nkhaneni Ramovha, the researcher therefore had to first seek permission from him in order to conduct research in all villages. On 20 July 2004 the researcher visited the chief to ask for permission to undertake the study in the villages. The chief permitted the researcher to conduct the study in November 2004 during the school holidays. However, the researcher was warned that young men attending the traditional initiation schools are not allowed to be interviewed by women. The chief suggested that a male researcher who attended the traditional initiation school before should interview male adolescents. The chief also referred the researcher to local sports leaders who could help identify suitable male respondents.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the researcher employed two male research assistants. This was done because the female researcher was not allowed to interview male respondents. The main reason for having two research assistants was to allow the second research assistant to take notes during the interview process.

Both research assistants were trained extensively with regard to methods used in data collection. This was done to avoid any problems that might emerge during the interviewing process. The research assistants were also trained to be non-judgemental.

All in-depth interviews were recorded on a tape recorder with the assistance of the note taker. The note takers also made extensive notes during the interviews. Tape recorders were only used after receiving the consent of the respondent. During in-depth interviews the researcher and a note taker noted the following; the respondent's body language and other non-verbal expressions. This was done to enable to determine the consistency of verbal and non-verbal responses.

In the village where the chief lives (Mulenzhe), the researcher was allowed to use the local council office as an interviewing venue. This was an advantage since the place

was secure and also situated at the centre of the village making it easily accessible. In the second village (Dididi), the interviews were conducted in one of the classrooms at the local high school. The headman granted the researcher permission to use one of the classrooms. At the last village the interviews were conducted in one of the research assistant's house since there was no venue provided by the local leader. This venue was most convenient because most of the respondents were familiar with the home of the research assistant.

4.8. Data Processing

The researcher and the two research assistants transcribed all the tapes used for recording these interviews. No problems were encountered during the transcription process especially with regard to the information on tapes. The tapes were clear and this made the transcribing process very easy. Some of the tapes, however, took very long to transcribe. After transcribing the interviews, the main researcher translated the interviews from Tshivenda to English. Hand written notes which were taken during the process of data collection were also used to assist in the translation process. This was done to reflect on some of the factors that emerged during the interviews.

4.9. Data Analysis

During the process of data analysis, the researcher read through all the interviews several times in order to ensure that the interviews were well understood. The process of re-reading was useful because it provided insights into the thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and behaviour of the adolescents. Thematic analysis was used to clarify the purpose of the interviews and the concepts explored. Themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1989). Themes are also identified by 'bringing together components or fragments of ideas, views perceptions or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone' (Leininger, 1985). Themes that emerge from the respondents' stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. The coherence of ideas provided by respondents are then rigorously analysed by the researcher depending on how different ideas or components fit together in a

meaningful way when linked together (Leininger, 1985). In thematic analysis, the researcher builds a valid argument by choosing the appropriate themes (Robrecht, 1995). This is normally done by reading the related literature or by repeatedly reading through the transcripts of the information gathered (Rice and Ezzy, 2000). Once the themes have been collected and the literature has been studied, the researcher is ready to formulate theme statements to develop a story line. A developed story line helps the reader to comprehend the process, understanding, and motivation of the interview (Rice and Ezzy, 2000).

4.10. Conclusion

The study site for the research was appropriate considering the fact that these places were mainly rural with a strong emphasis on traditional practices. The study used the qualitative methodology to obtain information about traditional initiation schools using in-depth interviews. This was done to gain more in-depth information about the subject under study including interviewees' perceptions, feelings and attitudes towards certain issues. The process of data collection was mainly made possible by gaining access through gatekeepers who helped the researcher identify respondents for the study. Data analysis used thematic analysis to help categorise vital issues reported by respondents giving weight to the choice of the research design used in this study as appropriate.

Chapter 5

Findings of the Research

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study will be presented and analysed. The purpose of using qualitative data was made in order to better understand young people's attitudes to traditional initiation schools. This chapter also explores the role of traditional initiation school in the context of AIDS epidemic.

5.2. Definition of Traditional Initiation Schools

The first part of the results looked at the definition of traditional initiation schools. The main question asked at this point was *'How would you define traditional initiation schools?'* This question was asked to both young females and males between the ages of 15 and 20 and facilitators for both female and male traditional initiation schools. The aim was to try and determine young people's understanding of traditional initiation schools as well as to establish whether there was any difference in the definition between young men and women.

There are different perspectives that were raised during the interviews concerning the definition of traditional initiation schools. Young men and women defined traditional initiation schools very differently. The majority of female respondents used the name *'Vhukomba'* for female traditional initiation schools. This name is derived from the word *'Khomba'* which is used to refer to a young woman. This may perhaps explain why female traditional initiation schools are called *'Vhukomba'* and the initiates are referred to as *'dzikhomba'* which is the plural for *'Khomba'*. *'Khomba'* is mainly used to describe a young woman who has reached menarche. Young women who reach menarche are often afforded elevated status in society. In most cases, *'Vhukomba'* involves two stages: the onset of menarche followed by attendance at a traditional initiation school.

Very few of the young women (including female facilitators) used the name *'Vhusha'* to describe traditional initiation schools. Some of the respondents said that attendance

at traditional initiation schools was seen as a sign of maturity. This is mainly because these schools are attended by young women just after they have reached menarche. This is seen in the following excerpt:

"I think 'Vhukomba' is some form of announcement to people that I have now matured or have become a grown up. This is to enable those who want to come with a marriage proposal to do so".

Female Adolescent – 13

"Vhusha is a place where girls go just after their first menstrual period. Normally, when a girl receives or gets her menstruation for the first, time she is seen as matured meaning that she is now a 'real' woman. Parents then decide to send her to the traditional initiation schools to be trained on how to be a woman."

Female Adolescent - 14

Once a young woman reaches menarche she is now considered to be 'mature' and as a result, she is seen as ready to attend a traditional initiation school. It also means that the young women must also receive some preparation for marriage. Thus, young women must attend traditional initiation schools for them to be considered marriageable. In summary, maturity is equated with the onset of puberty and therefore signals the transition to adulthood.

In addition, some young women described traditional initiation schools as those schools that teach young people the importance of respect. In most cases, young women are taught to respect their elders. Often parents are the main beneficiaries but also other family members, neighbours and members of the community. In traditional initiation schools young women are also taught that they should not shout or raise their voices when talking to elders. They must also be selective in their choice of words. The role of traditional initiation schools in socialising young women is illustrated in the following comments:

"Vhusha is a place where they teach people to be respectful, especially when they are talking to parents or elders in the community. These schools teach girls to select their words when speaking to elders and to show them respect. The training involves 'u losha' (kneeling down) when talking to elders as a

form of respect and not shouting to elders when having a conversation with them”.

Female Adolescent - 14

In addition to the above descriptions of traditional initiation schools, these schools also taught young women to know about men as their future husbands. In some of the illustrations provided, respondents added that traditional initiation schools train young women to treat their future husbands with respect and nurture them. In this way traditional initiation schools are viewed as a form of training that prepares young women for their future roles as wives. Herewith, are two definitions of traditional initiation school provided by a female respondent:

“Vhusha is a common school for VhaVenda girls. This is a place where girls are taught how to respect other people especially the elders, what to do when talking to elders especially men. These kinds of schools train girls to become better wives for their future husbands. Girls are also taught what to do when they get married with their husbands. What I can just say is that these girls are trained to be good women and also, future wives, mothers and daughter in-laws”

Female Facilitator - 28

Some of the respondents described traditional initiation schools as schools that have a negative impact on young peoples’ behaviour because they teach young people ‘unacceptable behaviour’ which they felt was not welcome. As a result, some of young people argued that these schools were not preparing them to be respectable people. Further questions were asked to clarify what interviewees meant by ‘unacceptable behaviour’? The response was, while the traditional initiation schools prepared young people for sexual relationship with their marital partners a large proportion of young people felt quite offended the excessive use of sexually explicit language to describe reproductive organs during the sessions. The use of sexually explicit language was seen as vulgar. As a result, one of the respondents felt that this kind of education was encouraging young women to be promiscuous. Also the use of sexually explicit language encouraged young women to be wayward and careless. This was stated as follows:

“Traditional initiation schools are schools where girls learn things that are ‘unacceptable’ or I should just say we learn how to misbehave. Those women teach us how to have sex with boys. They also use vulgar language. I also find it hard at times to sing because I feel like a useless person.”

Female adolescent - 7

“Vhukomba is something that does not give girls a brighter future”.

Female adolescent - 24

'Murundu' and 'Mula' are names used to refer to traditional initiation schools for men. The majority of male adolescents defined traditional initiation schools as a place where young men are circumcised and trained to be 'real' men as opposed to 'Shuvhuru' which is a derogatory term used to describe those men who did not attend. 'Shuvhuru' was described as something unpleasant and in most cases, unwelcome. Circumcision or 'urubiswa' was described as the main purpose of male traditional initiation schools. The traditional initiation schools were portrayed as schools that prepare young men for the transition into 'manhood.' As a result, young men who did not attend traditional initiation schools were not seen as 'real' men. Respondents were further probed about the meaning of 'real' men? Young men described 'real' men as those men who have been 'circumcised' or those who 'survived the bush' and 'completed the whole process of initiation'. The following are typical descriptions by male adolescents of traditional initiation schools:

“Murundu is a place where men gather including young men and elderly men to circumcise young boys who then become initiates and 'real' men after the initiation process.”

Male adolescent - 17

Murundu is the only place that creates 'real' men. Elderly men gather to initiate young boys and teach them about life. The whole process is done in the bush for a long period until elders know that those boys are now 'real' men.

Male adolescent- 23

Mula is a traditional school where men are supposed to be transformed from children to adults. In the olden days they used to say that if a man does not attend initiation schools he couldn't be a 'real' man since he did not go

through the circumcision process. During that time it was compulsory for everyman to be initiated."

Male adolescent - 19

Young men also emphasised that 'Murundu' is only meant for young men and therefore women are completely excluded from witnessing this process. One of the respondents explained that attendance at traditional initiation schools is compulsory. Respondents also explained that in the olden days, attending traditional initiation schools was compulsory for young people and as a result, young men who did not attend often became the subject of social ridicule.

Facilitators were also interviewed about the definition of traditional initiation schools. Interestingly, facilitators shared very similar views with young people concerning the definition of traditional initiation schools. They explained that initiation schools were crucial for the socialisation of young people. Most facilitators felt that traditional initiation school encouraged young men to be brave and courageous. These are some of the comments made by the facilitators during the interviews:

"Murundu is the most important training for young boys or any other men in life. This is where men are trained to be survivors or 'real' men. They learn to be brave and live life as 'real' men are supposed to. Young boys coming for the first time are initiated and circumcised. These can only be attended and witnessed by men."

Male facilitator - 29

"Murundu is about circumcising young initiates, teaching them rules of life and training them to be 'real' men. 'Real' men are supposed to be capable of staying in the bush for the period of three months. If a boy cannot take it then he is not going to be a good man."

Male facilitator - 30

5.2.1. Summary

There is substantial difference between initiation schools for men and women. In traditional initiation schools women are given training on sexual and reproductive health matters such as sexual relations, childbearing, marriage. As a result, traditional

initiation schools are seen as preparing young women for adulthood by imparting knowledge about sexual and family matters.

In addition, women are taught to be caring, subservient and respectful. This is in sharp contrast to men. In traditional initiations schools, men are taught to be dominant, brave and resilient. What is also striking is that women are seen as the 'providers' while men are seen as the 'consumers.' Young men did not stress the importance of respect. They were not given any instruction on the importance of respect. Only young women were given instruction on the importance of respect and caring.

However, some of the respondents had different opinions about traditional initiation schools. Some held very negative perceptions of traditional initiation schools because they were seen as misdirecting or misinforming young people. Some songs and words that were used to describe sexual activities and reproductive organs were considered unacceptable.

In traditional initiation schools, emphasis was placed on courage and bravery. It is also interesting to observe that men who were not initiated were not considered to be 'real' men. Living in the bush for a long period was considered as a form of training because initiates were taught to be resilient and brave. This is because the training normally takes place during the chilly winter season. Those young men that were able to weather the storm as it was were considered to be capable. In these schools, the emphasis was on nurturing 'real' men.

5.3. Administration

This part of the research grappled with issues involved in the administration of traditional initiation schools. The main purpose was to find out the average age of adolescents who attend traditional initiation schools. This section also deals with issues such as decision-making and recruitment.

5.3.1. Age

The majority of female respondents reported that they attended the traditional initiation schools at the age of 16. Also, some of the respondents indicated that they

attended traditional initiation school at a later age, often at age 17 and 18. However, respondents indicated that age was not the most important factor determining attendance at traditional initiation schools. There are also biological and economic factors which influence attendance at these schools. Young women had to reach menarche which commences at the onset of puberty. Secondly, the parents should be able to afford the fees charged by traditional initiation schools. However, for young men, age was a crucial factor determining attendance at traditional initiation schools. Young men reported attending these schools at different ages. The majority of the respondents said that they attended at the age of 13 years. However, some of the respondents attended at either an earlier or later age. Only one respondent indicated that he went to the school as early as age 6.

5.3.2. *Reasons for Time Preference*

The researcher also wanted to establish whether there were specific or preferred times of the year to attend these schools. Responses differed according to gender.

5.3.2.1. *Healing process*

Male respondents indicated that young men in Venda only attend traditional initiation schools during the winter season. This normally took place during the winter school vacations. In most cases, June and July were the preferred months of the year. However, some reported that they went earlier before the schools closed for the winter vacations. This enabled them to stay at least two to three months in the bush. The main reason for attending traditional initiation schools in winter was because it hastens the healing process. In summer the healing process is likely to take longer because the province has one of the highest temperatures. As a result, summer would not be ideal because it is too hot to conduct circumcisions. The following reasons were offered:

“Of course there is a specific time when boys are supposed to attend initiation schools. You see these things depend on the environment and seasons. If boys can just be taken for circumcision during summer or spring their wounds will never heal. That's why there is a specific season to take young boys for circumcision.”

“Winter is normally considered to be very good for male circumcision. When it is cold the wounds heal fast with the assistance of strong traditional medicine. This makes the process less painful and there is a short period of healing. Summer is too hot especially in our province [Limpopo]. It can be very dangerous for boys to be initiated during that time. We may end up sending them to the hospitals where they have cooling systems for the wounds.”

Male Facilitator - 3

5.3.2.2. *School Vacations*

The female respondents indicated that traditional initiation schools are held several times in a year. These schools are normally attended during summer, winter and spring. However, the preference is mainly for summer and winter. This was due to the fact that these coincided with the long school vacations which enable finishing the whole process. The spring vacations were not preferred because they were short and affected the completion of the process of initiation. Follow up questions were asked in connection with the reasons of choosing those specific months:

“These schools are normally attended during long [modern] school holidays. Some people, when their daughter starts menstruating, just want to send her immediately to the traditional initiation schools. September holidays are very short and there is not enough time to adjust to the training and the initiate has to start preparing for the beginning of normal school.”

Female Adolescent - 6

“Things are now different from the way they were during our time. We now have to wait for school to close before beginning initiation school. In June and December young people have enough time to undergo training without being interrupted by the modern schools. This is why most parents would rather send their children when they have enough time to complete the whole process. Normally it takes them 3 weeks to complete the whole programme.”

Female Facilitator - 30

5.3.3. *Recruitment Methods*

The research also intended to explore the *modus operandi* used in recruiting adolescents to attend traditional initiation schools. Respondents were asked to describe the way in which young people were recruited to traditional initiation school. Again in this case, females and males participants had different perceptions of the methods used.

5.3.3.1. *Unrealistic Promises*

The majority of young men indicated that the elders and other young people normally persuaded them to attend. Often they were deceived into attending traditional initiation schools. Some young men indicated that they joined the schools because they were made to believe that they would receive gifts such as helicopters and motorcycles. These are some of the examples provided by the adolescents;

“They tell us the in the initiation schools there are motorbikes and helicopters whereas there is none.”

Male Adolescent - 1

“The first one is that they tell us a man has to be circumcised. The other one is that they tell us there are motorbikes at the initiation schools.”

Male Adolescent - 9

“They normally mislead us and tell us that we will get gifts such as a bed. These kinds of gifts make us excited and look forward to the traditional initiation schools.”

Male Adolescent - 7

5.3.3.2. *Peer influence*

In most cases, attendance depended on whether or not the parents or guardians wanted young people to attend. Some of the adolescents pointed out that they were coerced to attend these schools by their parents. The influence of peers at times also played a vital role in recruiting some young people to attend traditional initiation schools especially in the case of young men. Some of the respondents pointed out that some young people attended traditional initiation schools without parental consent. The following examples illustrate this.

“Normally there are no methods used to recruit boys to attend the traditional schools. This depends on the individual or the parents of the children. When I say it depends on the individual, it is because some of the boys do not wait for the parent's decision but just want to follow their friends. No one tells them to go or there is no one who recruits them to the initiation schools but they just feel like they are missing out.”

Male Adolescent - 8

“Normally there is no one in particular who goes around recruiting people for this. This depends on families.”

Male Adolescent - 5

The respondents were also asked about the person responsible for recruitment and administration of the initiation schools. A female facilitator (Vho-Nyamatei) and a male facilitator (Vho-Maine) usually take responsibility for the traditional initiation schools for young women and young men respectively. Vho-Nyamatei is a name derived from the name Mutei meaning the “initiate”. This person facilitates the whole process of female initiations. This is normally an old woman elected by Vho-Makhadzi who is the village aunt from the chieftaincy. The term ‘Maine’ is commonly used to refer to traditional healers. In this case, the traditional healer is the person who performs the circumcision and also treats the wounds. The traditional healer also has the role of protection. Some believe that initiates may become bewitched during the process of circumcision. Therefore, the traditional healer protects the initiates during this process. The traditional healer is therefore considered to be a protector, the healer and the manager of the process.

5.3.4. *Reasons for Attending*

In terms of gender, there were similarities and differences in some of the reasons given by both men and young women for attending traditional initiation schools.

5.3.4.1. *Maturity*

Young people were asked what they thought were the reasons for them attending traditional initiation schools. The majority of male adolescents reported that their parents sent them because they had reached maturity. Respondents defined maturity as the ability to display confidence and confront challenges presented by life. Young people reported that their parents sent them because they had realised that they had grown up and had the qualities required to these schools.

5.3.4.2. *Age*

Respondents reported that they attended traditional initiation once they reached a 'suitable age.' When further asked about what they meant by 'suitable age', they mentioned ages 16 to 18 for young women and 6 to 13 for young men. For young men, the specified ages were associated with the ability to stay in the bush.

5.3.4.3. *Menarche*

The majority of young women said that they were sent to traditional initiation schools because they had reached menarche. However, only one young woman reported that the main reason why her family decided to send her to this school was to learn to care for her man after marriage. This included showing respect to her husband, and following his orders. It was therefore deemed necessary by the family to send her to the traditional initiation schools.

5.3.5. *Payments*

Respondents were asked whether or not they had to pay fees to attend traditional initiation schools. For females, the amount paid depended on their age and marital status. However, for males, the amount paid did not depend on their marital status. Males paid the same fee regardless of their marital status. However, prices seemed to increase as years passed. The highest fee paid by females was R150 and for males was

R300. However, these figures did not concur with those given by facilitators. The facilitators reported that young people pay up R80 for females and R100 for males.

5.3.6. Summary

In all the factors discussed above, gender difference could be observed from the responses. Females attend traditional initiation schools at a later age whereas males attend traditional initiation schools at a younger age. It is also interesting that males and females have different reasons for attending traditional initiation schools at different ages. Females have to wait for the onset of menarche and males have to appear brave enough to withstand the rigorous process of initiation.

There are specific times preferred to attend traditional initiation schools. What is striking is that young men attended during winter when it is cold. Coldness in this case is considered to be helpful in curing the wounds caused by circumcision. The specific time for females was tied more to the completion of the initiation exercise than to any other consideration. This is because for young women to fully complete the process of initiation, they need at least 6 weeks. Summer and winter school vacations offered females enough time to attend and complete the full course.

Some young men and women are forced to attend traditional initiation schools by their parents. They were not allowed to refuse to attend traditional initiation schools. In this case, attendance for young men and women is made compulsory by their parents. However, some parents duped their children into attending traditional initiation schools. Young people attended because they believed that they would receive gifts. These gifts were therefore used to encourage them to attend. This suggests that parents place a heavy emphasis on traditional practices and would do almost everything to ensure that their children adhere to these traditional practices. This sometimes means that the elders sometimes have to entice them with lucrative gifts.

5. 4. Impact

The main purpose of the research was to find out the impact of the traditional initiation schools on the sexual behaviour and reproductive health of young people. Respondents were asked if respondents engaged in sexual activities before or after the traditional initiations process and what were the consequences on their sexual and reproductive behaviour.

5.4.1. *Reasons for Sexual Activities*

During the interviews about sexual behaviour with young people, several reasons were provided as justification for their actions.

5.4.1.1. *Virginity*

In some societies, virginity is highly respected and valued and men and women are strongly encouraged to remain virgins until marriage. Some young people indicated that they had not had sexual intercourse before attending traditional initiation schools. This was because they wanted to avoid paying fines at the traditional initiation schools. At traditional initiation schooling, virginity testing is common and young women who are not virgins are often given large fines. Some young women also reported that they were virgins because they did not want to be labelled derogative terms by elderly people. The term 'dabadaba' was used to describe non-virgins. Culturally, young women are not expected to have sexual intercourse before marriage. However, a few young people reported having had sexual intercourse before attending traditional initiations. These young women demonstrated some element of regret for engaging in sexual intercourse before attending traditional initiation schools. They blamed their friends for not informing them about the virginity testing that occurs in traditional initiation schools. Some respondents felt that they would rather have not engaged in sexual intercourse than face embarrassment from their elders. This is shown in the following example:

“No I started having sex before I went to the initiation schools. My parents had to pay a fine because they found out that I've been sleeping around with boys. My parents were very much disappointed at that time because I was too young

and still considered a Sunday school girl. The thing is I did not know that they search for virginity in the initiation schools. My friends knew and still encouraged me to attend without telling me what was going to happen. I do not think I was going to have courage to attend if I knew about the virginity checking issue. Anyway it was done and I am over it. I was not the first one to be found like that. Most girls these days are no longer virgins at that age."

Female Adolescent - 6

Some of the girls were more concerned that they were discovered to be non-virgins and felt that they could have avoided the humiliation and embarrassment if they had remained virgins. Some also valued virginity not only for cultural reasons but also religious reasons.

5.4.1.2. Peer Interaction and Sexual Partners

The influence of peers whether it is positive or negative is of critical importance in the lives of young people (Campbell, 1980). Peers are seen as having powerful influence on young people's sexual behaviour. One of the respondents pointed out that she had no intention of having sex with her boyfriend but her friends called her a fool. Sometimes young people engage in sexual relationships because they are afraid of becoming the subject of ridicule and ostracism. Some of the respondents also reported engaging in sexual intercourse because they were concerned that their sexual partners would abandon them if they did not engage in sexual relations with them. Some of the respondents therefore had sexual relationship with their partners in order to ensure the survival of their relationship. Some of the comments were as follows:

"I decided to have sex with my boyfriend because I was mature by then. I knew that I had pleased my family by attending the 'Vhusha' and being a virgin. My parents were happy because they did not pay a fine for it. Just after the initiation I realised I also had to please myself. I was also happy because they taught me how I am supposed to do it with my boyfriend. My parents were never going to find out about this again and even if they did they knew it was time for me to do it. I am now a mature person."

Female Adolescent - 12

"There is no way I was going to pretend or act like I did not want to have sex when my boyfriend wanted to. All of my friends were having sex with their

boyfriends. I knew that I should have at least waited until my initiations, but I was afraid some of the girls might take my boyfriend. He really wanted us to have sex and I did not want to lose him."

Female Adolescent - 6

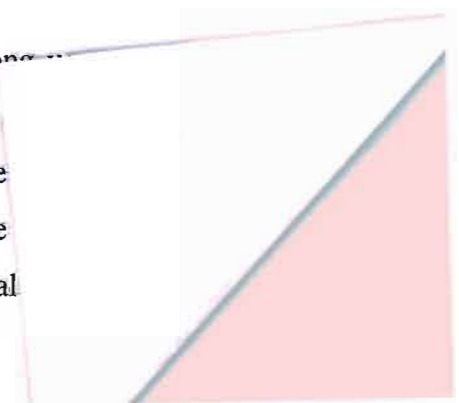
Some young men reported that they had sexual intercourse as a result of spending more time with their older peers. This was what some of them called 'hanging out with bros' meaning spending more time with friends. One of the respondents pointed out that he had friends who were much older than him and they persuaded him to have sexual intercourse. He noted that older friends are more likely to be more sexually experienced and are also more likely to be skilled at attracting women and are usually well aware of the coded language used by young women. The analysis also shows that some young men also engaged in sexual intercourse as a form of experimentation. They wanted to put into practice what they had learnt at traditional initiation schools.

5.4.1.3. Sexual Desire or Drive

The majority of young men reported that their sexual drive influenced them to have sexual intercourse. The sexual drive in this case was described as hormonal pressure that drives young people to engage in sexual activities. For some young men having an erection was said to be something that compels them to have sexual intercourse with a women. Sometimes their sexual drive encouraged them to search for young women in order to find sexual release. This means that when they had their sexual drive or desire for young women, they were starting to be men and it was time to search for young women. For most young men, having their first sexual experience signalled the transition to adulthood.

5.4.1.4. Religion

Sometimes religion serves to delay the onset of sexual debut among young men. One of the reasons young people reported that they had not yet had sexual intercourse was for religious reasons. Those who cited religion were in all cases strongly believed that their religion did not allow sexual intercourse. Some of them admitted that they were tempted to have sex several



members of their church were key in encouraging them to abstain from sexual relations. Their commitment to their religion therefore gave them the strength to avoid sexual relations until “‘God’ provides them with future partners.” Sexual intercourse was therefore described as something unclean and reckless.

Respondents who reported that they had had sexual intercourse were asked the reasons. Firstly, they were asked whether or not it was out of their own volition. The aim was to study the impact of traditional initiation schools and also to investigate their influence on the decision of young people to engage in sexual intercourse. Three striking factors were raised during the interviews: 'economic dependency on the sexual partner' and 'training provided at the traditional initiation schools'.

5.4.1.5. *Economic Dependency*

The majority of the respondents felt that they were not ready to have first sexual intercourse. They felt that they were persuaded to have sexual intercourse by their partners. Some of the respondents felt that they had not planned to have sexual relationships with their partner but they were afraid that if they did not have sexual intercourse their partners would abandon them. Some young women were economically dependent on their male sexual partners for pocket money for use at school. The economic dependency however did not only take a monetary form but also included clothing and jewellery. Some of them also indicated that their parents provided for them, but the provision was not substantial. Below is one of the examples:

“Sometimes as a person you just do not have a choice at all. My boyfriend was working as a taxi driver during that time. He gave me more money than my own parents did. There is no way I was going to say no to him at that time. Saying no was going to make him leave me and I would be left with no money. He was kind enough to give me money and I had to be kind to him too.”

Female Adolescent - 24



5.4.1.6. Traditional Initiation Schools Training

Young people also blamed traditional initiation schools for their sexual behaviours. Most interestingly was that some young people perceived these schools as a way of encouraging them to practice sexual activities. Some also expressed regret for attending traditional initiation schools. Those who expressed regret were often those who already had children. Most of these young women had children soon after attending traditional initiation schools. They felt that this was because they were exposed to graphic and sexually explicit information as part of their training at traditional initiation schools.

Respondents were further probed to try and find out what they thought influenced them to be sexually active. Young people stated that they were taught sexual activities such as 'how they were supposed to have sex with men'. Some of them felt that if they were not made aware of the sexual activities they would not have engaged in such activities. However, views from facilitators were sought and they revealed that the content of traditional initiation schools is meant to prepare young people for sexual and reproductive matters that they would face in adulthood.

The majority of young women also reported that traditional initiation schools created a false perception of women in their society. There is a perception that young women who attend traditional initiation schools are more knowledgeable about sexual activities and this has often resulted in some young women engaging in sexual activities which may sometimes result in early childbearing. One of the respondents confessed that within two years after her initiation she had sexual intercourse with several young men. She blamed the traditional initiation schools for her sexual behaviour. Some young people held very negative perceptions of traditional initiation schools. They felt that these schools encouraged young people to engage in promiscuous sexual behaviour. They also felt that young people are encouraged to engage in early sexual activity which increases their risk of an unwanted pregnancy. Some young people also felt that these schools, instead of instilling respect for other people, encouraged them to be rude and malicious. Typical comments on some of the issues are as follows:

"I believe those teenager who are teenage mothers did so because of the traditional initiations. Most of them tell lies to their parents and say they are going to participate in the vhusa night so that their parents can grant them a night out. These people hardly come to the traditional initiation schools. They spend time with boys and come and only join the group in the morning so that people can tell their parents that they were there for the whole night. The initiations help them have more time to sleep around with boys and they then fall pregnant during the process."

Female Adolescent - 13

The language and songs used in the initiation schools are vulgar. Everything is about sex. I sometimes feel very uncomfortable singing with them. There is honestly nothing to learn there except 'vhudabadaba'.

Female Adolescent- 24

There were also different perspectives with this regard. Traditional initiation schools were also acknowledged by some young people to have a positive influence on the sexual and reproductive lives of young people. They taught young men to become more desirable to women. These perceptions were mostly held by young men. These young people believed that traditional initiation schools created 'real' men who could only come out of 'murundu'. A man who did not attend murundu was considered to be unable to 'handle women' and did not have a 'proper spear or weapon'. The weapon in this case referred to the circumcised penis. Circumcised penises were perceived as being desirable and proper. Without the above-mentioned qualities, a male according to these young people could not perform manly duties.

It was also believed that traditional initiation schools promoted early pregnancies. Respondents felt that traditional initiation schools did not warn young men about the possibilities of impregnating young women during sexual activities. One of the respondents believed that the intentions were good but it led to negative outcomes. Some of the men were not financially secure and as a result were not in a position to support their children. Thus, they were likely to be negatively affected by an unwanted pregnancy. As a result, some young men felt that they should have been taught about the importance of delaying sexual intercourse at the traditional initiation schools which would have helped them to avoid an unwanted pregnancy. Some of

them regretted trying to prove their manhood as this had led them to drop out of school since they had other responsibilities. They had to often assume responsibility for their child and sometimes the mother of their child. In some interviews, some respondents also suggested that there should be some changes in the curriculum especially with regard to sexual and reproductive health matters. This was because some young people did not properly understand the teaching they received at traditional initiation schools and as a result, they often felt that the traditional initiation school was encouraging them to engage in early sexual intercourse. The following is one of the illustrations:

Most of my friends impregnated girls because they were not taught during murundu process that they have to protect themselves when they have sex. The only thing they tell us is that they are sharpening our weapon so that it can look nice for women. They do not tell us that women can also be dangerous and destroy all of their future dreams. It is really sad because most of my friends are still young but they are now working in construction to buy food for the wife and the child.

Male Adolescent - 22

The use of sexually explicit language in the traditional initiation schools was not appreciated by young people because they believed it encouraged young people to be irresponsible and disrespectful. In particular, they felt that it encouraged young men to be disrespectful to women. Some of them indicated that it is especially difficult for a man to have respect for women just after the attending *mula*.

5.4.2. Summary

Young people gave a number of reasons for not engaging in sexual intercourse. One of the reasons was about the preservation of virginity. Some felt that they had to remain virgins for the sake of their parents and also to earn respect from the elders of the village. They were particularly concerned about their parents discovering that they were not virgins and also that they were afraid of the reactions of their parents. Those who did engage in sexual intercourse reported experiencing peer pressure. They blamed their peers for encouraging them to be involved in sexual activities. They felt that their decision did not have much to do with their own actions but that of peers. For some young people, sexual drive was blamed for their early sexual activities. In

this case, sexual excitement and having an erection for young men influenced them to search for young women for sexual pleasure. This was mainly relevant for young men who believed that their sexual drive forced them to seek sexual pleasure from young women. It was also noted that religion was one of the most powerful factors influencing sexual behaviour. Some young people did not engage in sexual relationship because of strong religious beliefs. Economic dependency was also identified as one of the factors compelling young people to engage in early sexual activity. Young women were particularly vulnerable because they were afraid that their partners would abandon them. As a result, economic dependency reduced their ability to negotiate safer sexual practices with their sexual partners. Lastly, the contents of the traditional initiation schools were believed to play a role in encouraging young people to engage in sexual intercourse. This notion came out of the perception that songs and the language used in these schools created sexual awareness among young people.

5.5. The Importance of Traditional Initiation Schools

Respondents were also asked about the importance of traditional initiation schools in their lives. The original question was stated as follows; *'How important do you think traditional initiation schools are in your life or in young people's lives?'* The purpose of this question was twofold: firstly, to find out how much young people valued the practice of traditional initiation schools and secondly, to determine the respondent's attitudes towards traditional initiation schools.

5.5.1. Respect of elders

Some of the respondents felt that traditional initiation schools are not important in their lives and they do not understand the purpose they are supposed to serve. However, they felt that they attended traditional initiation schools because they were highly valued by their parents. As a result, these young people felt that they were attending traditional initiation schools in order to please their parents. Hence, young people's decision to attend traditional initiation schools is strongly influenced by their respect for their parents. One of the respondents also explained that elders in the

community still placed strong emphasis on traditional initiation schools as young people who attend these schools are treated with respect by the elders and are seen as well mannered. The fact that elders show an enormous interest in the practice made the adolescents value the practice but they only attended to show respect and to be valued as good people. An example of this is as follows:

The way I see it, I think it is not important to us as boys because most of us when we attend these schools we were not willing to go but our parents force us to go because they think it is very much important to be there. Generally I think it is not important to attend.

Male Adolescent- 1

5.5.2. *Lack of Benefits*

Some young people also believed that there were no benefits in attending traditional initiation schools and that is why they did not value them. Respondents felt that they did not obtain any academic value from these schools. They felt that the provision of certificates after the completion of the initiation process would add value to the traditional initiation schools. In addition, young people felt that these schools did not improve their career prospects. Some young people felt that the traditional initiation schools would be more highly valued if they were given some sort of accreditation or if they provided some assistance in their future career.

5.5.3. *The influence of Traditional Initiation Schools on Promiscuity*

Traditional initiation schools were seen as promoting promiscuity. Some young people felt that when they taught them about sexuality and other related matters in traditional initiation schools they were actually encouraging them to have many sexual partners. Young people were concerned that if they continued participating in the traditional initiation schools, they will be labelled sexually promiscuous. Often young people who are seen as promiscuous are not respected by members of the society. Some of the respondents indicated that they were afraid to associate with those young people who were seen as promiscuous as they may also influence them to behave in a similar manner. Respondents felt that it was best for them to stay away

from traditional initiation schools after they had completed their own course of initiation process.

5.5.4. *Isolation and Rejection*

Some of the respondents reported that those who did not attend were isolated and often faced rejection as; members of the community did not want to associate with them. As a result, young people felt that traditional initiation schools were very important because they helped them to assimilate into society. One of the main concerns experienced by young men was the fear that, not only their male but also their female peers might not want to have anything to do with them. There is a commonly hold belief among young people that those who do not attend traditional initiation schools are not 'real' men and as a result, they are not able to please women. For these reason, some young men felt that attending these schools was imperative.

5.5.5. *Entertainment*

Traditional initiation schools were perceived to be important because they are used to get young people to interact and socialise especially during school holidays. For those who have been to traditional initiation schools, these schools were thought to offer entertainment during school holiday. Many young people do not have any recreational facilities in the community. As a result, the traditional initiation schools are a form of recreation. Young people normally flock to the traditional schools because they do not have recreational activities in their community. One of the examples given was that there were interesting story-telling by the elderly people especially in the evenings when people discuss social issues. Young people showed an enormous interest in the entertainment they received while attending traditional initiation schools.

5.5.6. **Summary**

The results discussed above brought interesting reflections of young people's perceptions of traditional initiation schools. It is also interesting to note that young people value and respect what their parents perceive to be important in life. It may not

necessarily be important in their lives, but as long as their parents want them to attend, so young people will attend as a form of respect to their parents. Despite, the fact that modernisation is bringing changes in all aspects of life, these young people were still showing enormous respect for their parents and other elderly people in their communities with regard to their cultural values and practices in general and initiation in particular.

In addition to their respect for parents, young people also valued elders as role models. The stories told by elderly people during the process of initiation encouraged most young people to participate in traditional practices. The fact that young people felt that socialising with elders offered benefits in terms of entertainment was considered to be part of the learning process. This shows that young people still feel that the elderly have a role to play in imparting advice and guidance. The fear of being considered to be disrespectful was one of the motives noted in the results as young women were concerned about being labelled promiscuous and young men were concerned about isolation and rejection.

However, those who had negative perceptions about the traditional initiation schools also had their own reasons. Those young people who behaved promiscuously persuaded other people to believe that traditional initiation schools taught them to behave that way. This is because some young people felt that the traditional initiation schools encouraged promiscuous behaviour. Some young people started behaving promiscuously after attending traditional initiation schools and as a result, this discouraged other young people from attending traditional initiation schools. They did not want to attend traditional initiation schools because of the fear of being labelled as promiscuous and criticised. Moreover, some young women felt that traditional initiation schools created confusion and misconceptions about those who had newly graduated from traditional initiation schools. Misconceptions were concerning surrounding believes that newly female graduates from the traditional initiation schools had greater sexual skills and knowledge which attracted more young men to those initiates. There was also the belief that young people engaged in premarital sexual relationships and early childbearing after attending traditional initiation schools. Young people indicated that they did not value traditional initiation schools because they did not feel it was beneficial to them. They felt that the schools should

provide some assistance with career choices and that participants should receive a certificate after the completion of the whole process.

5.6. HIV/AIDS

This section mainly focuses on HIV/AIDS and is largely intended to investigate young people's knowledge and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS. These questions were asked in order to establish whether the traditional initiation schools play a role in preventing HIV infections. On HIV/AIDS issues the first question asked was '*What are the methods used in preventing HIV?*' AIDS-related knowledge, attitudes, beliefs of susceptibility, and self-efficacy regarding performance of safe sexual practices of young people will provide valuable information for assessing the level of AIDS risk in this age population and targeting particular behaviours for prevention.

5.6.1. *Condoms*

The majority of respondents reported that there is only one method used in preventing HIV/AIDS, which was the condom. Young people showed a fairly good knowledge and understanding of condoms. They indicated that the main source of information about condoms was the local clinics, schools and the mass media. Most respondents perceived condoms to be the most effective method in preventing the spread of HIV infections.

5.6.2. *Abstinence and Faithfulness*

Respondents also identified other methods that they perceived to be effective at preventing HIV/AIDS. A number of respondents stressed the importance of 'not having a sexual partner', 'abstaining from sexual activities', 'being faithful to one sexual partner' and 'having one trusted sexual partner'. These attitudes were more likely to be held by those who were strong believers in the Christian faith. This was demonstrated during the interviews when some of the respondents stressed that 'abstinence' was important for religious reasons. One of the respondents mentioned that abstinence is considered one way of following the commandments of 'God'. This conclusion was drawn from the statement below:

HIV can only be prevented by being faithful to ourselves first, and the partners we intend to marry in the near future. The most important thing is to be faithful to God's commandments as children of God. If we follow what the Bible tell us we can be protected from most of the disease especially HIV and other diseases caused by the devil's work.

Male Respondent-29

The above quotation shows that most young people have a good understanding of the methods that are used to prevent HIV/AIDS. However, some young people felt that adherence to religious practices can also work effectively to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS. In this case, respondents were emphasising the importance of abstaining from sexual intercourse in order to prevent becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. These respondents believed that people who remain faithful and obey God's commandments may be protected from HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the questions on methods used in preventing HIV/AIDS, young people were also asked about risks of HIV/AIDS. The question asked was '*What behaviours can lead to HIV infection?*' The question sought to investigate if young people had knowledge of risky behaviours that could lead to the further spread of HIV/AIDS. Respondents, in this case, identified several risky behaviours that could lead to people getting HIV/AIDS.

5.6.3. Unsafe sex

The majority of respondents identified unsafe sex as one of the key factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Unsafe sex refers to sex without the condom. These young people believed that when a person practices unsafe sex the risk of HIV infection is high. Risky sexual behaviour was seen to be influenced by misconceptions among young people in the society. Some respondents emphasised that these misconceptions influenced some young people not to use condoms when having sexual intercourse. Below is an example of some of the views about condoms:

Not taking care of yourself such as telling people that 'I do not eat chappies with its cover', sleeping at the 'shabeens' and sleeping around with different men. Some of us also believe that condoms have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

Male Adolescent-8

Sometimes negative attitudes may serve as a barrier to condom use. Some young people engaged in sexual intercourse without a condom because they felt it was not natural to use a condom. Informal beer-selling places often referred to as 'shabeens' were perceived to be risky because people sleep there and under the influence of alcohol often have unprotected sex with multiple sexual partners. Young people viewed those people who consume high quantities of alcohol to be at high risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS. This was because they believed that when people are under the influence of alcohol they are not in the right state of mind to negotiate safer sex. Thus, the use of alcohol also influences people to practice unsafe sex with even multiple partners.

5.6.4. *Multiple Sexual Partners*

Young people also associate multiple sexual partnerships with an increased risk to HIV/AIDS. Respondents showed a very strong dislike of multiple sexual partnerships as that they felt that it put them at danger of HIV/AIDS. In one of the interviews, a respondent reported that when one of the sexual partners is not faithful, they risk not only their own life but also their partner's life. Men and women sometimes engage in multiple sexual partners when they are under the influence of alcohol. Often alcohol encourages young men and women to engage in irresponsible behaviour. Young people believed that a person who is under the influence of alcohol is not able to think rationally and as a result, is more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as having unprotected sexual intercourse with persons unknown to him/her.

5.6.4. *Accidents*

One other risk factor reported by young people associated with the spread and transmission of HIV was that of contamination of blood during accidents. Some of the respondents felt that if people were to put gloves on when rescuing injured people they might not acquire HIV. In this case, respondents showed fear of rescuing others during accidents because they would be putting their own lives at risk. This was noted after one of the respondents explained that helping people during accidents was no longer safe because most people do not keep gloves with them.

5.6.6. *Symptoms*

Respondents were also asked about the possible symptoms of HIV infection. They pointed out some of the factors include 'loss of weight', 'loss of hair', 'isolation from other people', 'strange sores all over the body' and 'not having a shining skin' or a combination of these symptoms. These factors were believed to be the main symptoms to identify an infected person. They also pointed out that people living with HIV/AIDS are unable to show a nourished skin no matter what the kind of lotion they apply.

5.6.7. *Chances of Infection*

Young people were also asked about the chance of people living with HIV/AIDS infecting others. The main aim was to try and investigate beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of young people towards people who are living with HIV/AIDS. This would also help understand the knowledge of young people concerning their own susceptibility.

5.6.7.1. *Blood Transmission*

Some of the respondents suspected that some of the infected people could intentionally squeeze few drops of blood in food so that they could infect their family members. Most young people seemed concerned about this issue and also showed great fear. They also believed that some of the infected people might cut themselves unintentionally when preparing food for family members and infect them with HIV.

5.6.7.2. *Toilet Sharing*

Young people indicated that sharing the same toilet and bathroom was very risky when it comes to HIV infection. They were concerned about the fact that an infected person may leave some bloodstains on the toilet seat and bath which may cause infection to friends and family members. To share these facilities with HIV infected people was considered risky for family members and friends.

5.5.7.3.

Traditional Initiation School's Role

Respondents were also asked about the role played by traditional initiation schools as far as HIV is concerned. The majority of respondents stated that traditional initiation schools had no role to play in HIV prevention. Some of them reported that the themes of these schools had nothing to do with HIV. However, a few respondents pointed out that sometimes traditional initiation schools may contribute to the further spread of HIV infection. One of the respondents explained that during circumcision the traditional healer do not use sterilised equipment. The main fear was transmission of infected blood during circumcision. Young people were concerned that if traditional healers continue to use equipment that was not sterilised, then young people may be at risk of being infected during the process of initiation.

5.5.8. Summary

This section discussed knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the methods used to protect against this risk. It is abundantly clear from the above discussions that there are still some misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. There is an urgent need for concerted efforts by various stakeholders including traditional initiation schools to play a role in curbing the further spread of HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 6

6.1. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Traditional initiations are a part of young people's lives in Venda. They play a role in informing and educating young people about issues of sexuality and reproductive health. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of traditional initiation schools on young people's sexual and reproductive health behaviour. The findings of this study may not necessarily be representative of the entire population of the Limpopo Province or Venda tribe as the results are based on a small sample. However, the study hopes to provide some insight into the impact of traditional initiation schools on young people's sexual and reproductive health.

Young men in the study indicated that male traditional initiation schools are normally held in the bush. This kind of environment may not necessarily be conducive for the good health of young people, especially after circumcision. Learning needs to occur in an environment that will not impact negatively on the health of young people. To help create a high-achieving learning environment young people need to have the most advanced curriculum and instruction techniques combined with a supportive learning environment in traditional initiation schools. Moreover, the environment needs to be suitable for young people to stay for a period of more than a month. In addition, the curriculum should address such things as challenges young people face in their social lives. In this kind of environment, facilitators can assist young people in complex problem solving and exploring ideas and issues, and draw on the community's culture, experiences, and knowledge. Young people at risk of negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes need to have environments that encourage them to engage in responsible sexual behaviour.

There is no consensus among scholars, philosophers and politicians about the definition of culture. Culture, as a body of learned behaviours common to a given human society, acts like a template (i.e. it has a predictable form and content), shaping behaviour and consciousness from generation to generation. Culture resides in all learned behaviour (Gray, 1995; Walters, 1997).

Traditional initiation schools disseminate information about sexuality and other reproductive health matters. In traditional initiation schools learning takes place in a traditional setting. Education is often associated with the process of learning that occurs in the classroom. However, the process of learning may also occur outside the classroom. Education can occur at home, in the community and sometimes, in traditional settings. Education provides knowledge and also, helps individual achieve their optimal potential. One does not only acquire knowledge from a teacher; one can learn and receive knowledge from a parent, family member and even an acquaintance (Kerckhoof *et al*, 1976). One of the purposes of education is to train the human mind which in turn helps individuals to rationalise and make decisions and to attain information from the external world. Therefore, education helps individuals to acquaint themselves with their past and receive necessary information regarding their future and present (Hood, 1969; Platts, 1962). Indeed, it is also legitimate to acquire education in the form of socialisation and or acculturation (Hood, 1969).

Traditional initiation schools vary from one culture to the other. These schools are very different for men and women. In traditional initiation schools young women are taught to be good daughters, wives and mothers. In this regard, the traditional initiation schools are preparing young women for the transition to adulthood. The socialisation that young women receive also instructs them to comply with issues that would affect them at a later stage. The training also encourages young women to assume greater responsibility in the family.

The majority of young men reported that traditional initiation schools train them to be 'real' men. A 'real' man was seen as someone who was able to withstand circumcision during the cold winter months and also spend time in the bush. The purpose of initiation under these conditions was to train young men to be brave and courageous. In traditional initiation schools young men are encouraged to be more confident and independent. As part of their training, they usually spend a few months in the bush. The aim is to socialise men to be self-reliant, aggressive, and more competitive (Schlegel, 1995). The role of the traditional initiation schools is to encourage men to assume responsibility and leadership in the community and in a society at large (Jules-Rosette, 1980).

Knowledge about sexuality is an important factor which influences the formation of opinions and sexual behaviour (Gage, 1998). The results show that young people in Venda are provided with information about sexuality and reproductive health matters in traditional initiation schools. According to the facilitators, the school prepares young people for healthy sexual relationships. They feel that young people have the right to accurate information about sexuality. The facilitators felt that the knowledge provided in the traditional initiation schools prepared young people for sexual activities in their marital relationships. They emphasised that the information obtained on sexual and reproductive health matters at traditional initiation schools was only meant to be used after marriage. Facilitators also felt that traditional initiation schools played a role in delaying the onset of sexual debut and avoiding the risks of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies amongst young people. However, young people did not share similar views. Some young people considered the information provided at traditional initiation schools to be harmful instead of being helpful. They felt quite strongly that the influence of traditional initiation schools was negative because they encouraged young women to engage in promiscuous behaviour. This contributed to a great deal of confusion among young people concerning the choice of whether to attend or not to attend traditional initiation schools.

Lack of parental communication with regard to issues of sexuality and reproductive health may have also played a role in these negative perceptions. In most societies, parents and children rarely discuss sexual matters. It is often culturally taboo for parents to broach these subjects with their children. Young people often find it very hard to accept such information especially when it comes from the traditional initiation schools. If parents communicated these issues with their children, children would have found it easier to accept such information in the traditional initiation schools. It is also apparent that young people would prefer receiving this kind of information from sources other than traditional initiation schools.

Young people reported that they normally attend traditional initiation schools, sometimes as early as 6 years old. Young men often attend traditional initiation schools at a much earlier age than young women. At age six, children have reached a stage of cognitive growth where they are capable of learning and remembering things (Piaget, 1972; Bruner, 1966; Kuhn *et al* 1977). The cognitive stage or what Piaget

named concrete operational stage involves such things as thinking logically with limited ability to extend logic to abstract concepts; disdain for imaginative and illogical thinking of early childhood, accumulation of knowledge and gradual development of ability to apply learned concepts to new tasks (Piaget, 1990). However, young people at this stage do not have the ability to question or critique some of the things they may be taught. This worked as an advantage for the facilitators of traditional initiation schools because the young people were less likely to question particular practices. Young women reported that they normally attend traditional initiation schools between the ages of 15 to 19, which usually coincides with the stage of adolescence. It is at this stage that intelligence is demonstrated (Piaget, 1972). This stage also results in the transformation from adolescence to adulthood. During this stage, young people acquire information and skills that prepare them for greater independence.

There were different methods used in recruiting young people to participate in traditional initiation schools. Young women mostly had no choice but they had to obey their parents' commands. When it was 'the right' time for young women to attend traditional initiation, they were told by their parents that they will be attending these schools. Sometimes this occurred without their consent. Traditionally, attendance to the traditional initiation schools for young women in Venda was compulsory. Young women were compelled by their parents to attend these schools. Young men also had to be persuaded to attend these schools. Elders or parents often had to make promises of lucrative gifts in order to persuade young men to attend traditional initiation schools. Peers were also important in recruiting young men to these schools. Parents were aware that there was a greater chance that young people will listen to their peers. This could explain why older members of the community encouraged those young people who had completed the process of initiation to persuade those who had not attended traditional initiation schools to undergo the process of initiation.

Young people had different reasons for attending traditional initiation schools. The majority of young women reported that they were sent to attend traditional initiation schools once they reached menarche. According to some of the respondents, menarche was seen as a mark of maturity. The stage of adolescence is a period of

physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity (Smith *et al*, 1985). The process of physical changes is known as puberty, and it generally takes place in young women between the ages of 8 and 14, and young men between the ages of 9 and 16 (Smith *et al*, 1985). This is because during puberty, major differences of size, shape, composition, and function develop in many body structures and systems of young people.

Young men usually attend traditional initiation schools as soon as they reach puberty. Some of the male respondents reported that they attended traditional initiation schools because they had reached the 'proper age.' It was common for young men to attend traditional initiation schools before they reach the age of 15. In Venda, young people normally attend traditional initiation schools during puberty. Puberty provides visible, undeniable evidence of physical maturity, obvious maleness or femaleness, and the ability to reproduce (Worthman, 1987). The normal developmental task of establishing an adult sexual identity and the capacity for intimacy may be frustrated by the prolonged interval between attainment of reproductive maturity and social permission to express one's sexuality as an adult (Dworksy, 1984). Adolescence is a period of profound changes and it often accompanied by bodily changes. The traditional initiation schools have a role to play in guiding young people in order to better understand and cope with bodily changes that they are experiencing. In the absence of this information, they are likely to engage in risky behaviours such as having unprotected sex leading to unwanted pregnancies (and sometimes even unsafe abortions) and sexually transmitted infections (Meekers and Klein, 2002: 335). It is possible that attendance at traditional initiation schools at this stage of life may reduce any crisis in sexual identities that may emerge later but also allows them to assume more adult roles in society (Brown, 1963; Barry III and Schlegel, 1980; Barry *et al*, 1957). This is consistent with the findings of the study as traditional initiation schools produce "real" men, respected in society and capable to carry their roles in the society.

During this period young people go through a transition from adolescence to adulthood. The period of adolescence varies from person to person, but generally falls approximately between the ages 12 and 20 and encompasses both physiological and psychological changes (Schlegel, 1995). Physiological changes lead to sexual

maturity and usually occur during the first several years of the period (Chilman, 1990). Adolescence is also a cultural and social phenomenon and therefore its endpoints are not easily tied to physical milestones. Maturity in body often leads to an interest in sexual activities sometimes leading to early childbearing (United Nations, 2003).

The majority of young men and women indicated that they were attending formal schools and were often available during the school vacation to learn more about traditional practices. Young people placed enormous emphasis on their formal education and thus traditional practices were not allowed to disrupt their formal schooling. Traditional initiation schools often accommodate young men and women attending formal schools. Young people attend tradition initiation schools during school holidays. The school holidays were seen as most convenient because they allowed young people to complete the entire initiation process. However, some young people reported attending traditional initiation schools during school holidays in order to keep themselves busy. Many of the young people come from areas that lack recreational facilities and as a result there is not much to occupy their time during the school holiday. Instead of twiddling their fingers during school vacations, young people therefore have the option of participating in traditional initiation schools.

In some societies, especially in Asian countries, there is still a strong emphasis on virginity. However, young women in this study did not place a strong emphasis on virginity. Young people observed that virginity was more highly valued by their parents. Often parents disapprove of the loss of virginity before marriage and are especially adamant about their daughters remaining virgins. A primary motivator of this standard is the concern about the future of young women who may be at risk not only of pregnancy but also disease. Sometimes, virginity is also used to protect young people from seduction and impregnation and diseases. Studies conducted in Southern Africa show that some societies are now starting to conduct virginity testing as a way to incorporate traditional practices while addressing the contemporary problem of HIV/AIDS (Lee, 2004; LeClerc-Madlala, 2001; Jones, 2001; Scorgie, 2002). The practice is done to reiterate the importance of abstaining from sex until marriage and emphasizes the sexual rights and responsibilities of women (Lee, 2004). Some young women did not consider virginity to be important and often engage in

sexual relationships prior to marriage. However, in some societies, preserving virginity until marriage is an important goal (Schlegel, 1990). In South Africa, young people engage in premarital activities at early age. A review of current studies suggests that at least half of young people in South Africa are sexually active at age 16 and probably 80% are by the age of 18 (Eaton *et al.* 2003).

In many African cultures, heavy emphasis is placed on children. A woman with a child is likely to be highly respected and also given high social status (Preston-Whyte *et al.*, 1991). A woman without a child becomes a subject of pity and earns little respect from society. In South Africa, the majority of women start childbearing before they reach the age of 30 (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1992). According to Preston-Whyte (1990) unmarried women in South Africa still want to bear children regardless of their marital status. It is believed in the African culture that a woman's life is not complete if she does not have a child and that childbearing is also viewed as a form of social security in old age (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1992). In South Africa, adolescent child bearing is a huge problem among young African women. However, marriage is not seen as a prerequisite for childbearing. As a result, young unmarried women find themselves under enormous pressure to demonstrate their fertility by bearing children (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1992).

Religion plays an important role in regulating an individual's sexuality. Often religious principles, regulations and practices affect our everyday interactions. It is also believed that religious beliefs influence sexual attitudes and behaviour (Jensen *et al.*, 1990; Le Gall, 2002; Mahoney, 1980). Greenberg, Bruess and Haffner (1999) are of the opinion that religious and spiritual beliefs impacts on feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, premarital sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception and abortion. Some young people cited religion as a major factor influencing their decision not to engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Religion in this case did not only help protect their virginity, but also helped to avoid unplanned pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections. Values, opinions and beliefs are an important part of a person. Although it may not be precisely clear how they are formed, it is believed that they are influenced by family, friends and religion (Morris, 1994; Netting, 1992).

The majority of young men reported that young people who do not attend traditional initiation schools are often ridiculed and isolated. There exists strong pressure for

young people to attend traditional initiation schools. Peer groups can be notoriously cruel and may ridicule or isolate those who do not conform to a certain image (Hughes and McCauley, 1998). This was one of the main factors which influenced young people to participate in the traditional initiation schools. This notion is also experienced in other cultures. In Zambia, for example, young women who do not attend the 'chisungu' ceremony are considered to be a 'piece of rubbish' (Jules-Rosette, 1980: 393). Social pressure leaves young women with no choice but to believe and accept that they must be initiated. The notion also makes the recruiting process easy since most young people would be willing to attend because of fear of the consequences of not attending.

Both males and females respondents reported peer pressure as a key factor in encouraging them to attend traditional initiation schools, however, males were more likely than females to submit to peer pressure (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986). Young men were more likely than young women to succumb to peer pressure to engage in sexual intercourse. Often young men mimicked the behaviour of their peers as they were afraid that if they did not comply their friendship would be terminated. This pressure was again noticed by young men who felt that attending traditional initiation schools helped them gain the respect of their peers. Some argue that the impact of peers on young people is influenced by parent-adolescent communication (Wright, Peterson, & Barnes, 1990). One study found out that although young college women rate friends as a more important source of information about sex than parents, parents have more influence than peers on sexual attitudes (Sanders & Mullis, 1988). In addition, sexual permissiveness and intercourse are related to parental discipline and control; a relationship that is curvilinear (Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986). Parental influence on sexuality is direct as well as indirect.

Young people were also asked if their first sexual intercourse was voluntary. Many of the respondents reported that their first sexual encounter was not voluntary. In her study in KwaZulu-Natal, Manzini (2001) also found that the first sexual intercourse for many women is often coerced. In Nigeria, studies show that 20% of young people reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced while in Malawi, over a half of young people reported experiencing forced first sex (Youth Advocates, 2000; Wood and Jewkes, 2001). In the present study, some of the young people indicated that their

partners persuade them to engage in sexual activities. Many of the young women were dependent on their sexual partners for economic support and as a result, they felt that they could not refuse them sex. Poverty often contributes to vulnerability in sexual relations and reduces the ability to negotiate safer sexual practices. Some young women reported having had unprotected sexual relations with their partners because they were afraid of their partners abandoning them. Some South African studies reveal that there is high frequency of violence in the context of intimate partner relationships amongst young people. This was also attributed to the country's recent political and social transition (Jewkes *et al* 2001; Wood and Jewkes, 1997; Heise *et al* 1995; Vargas, 1997; Crothers, 2001). It is believed that high levels of inequality in the country also impact most negatively on the poorest sectors of society. Sometimes poverty forces young women to engage in sexual intercourse with men in return for money. This may be regarded as a form of forced sex because the young woman's willingness to participate in sexual intercourse is influenced by other factors such as poverty than their own volition.

Sometimes gender stereotypes about acceptable behaviour for men and women may also contribute to risky sexual behaviour which may ultimately lead to unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS). Impoverished conditions may increase the vulnerability of young people. The debate on the role of poverty in driving the sexual transmission of HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa is widely acknowledged and accepted in the literature (SAHARA, 2001; Cohen, 1998). Poverty restricts access to adequate health care, social services, education, employment opportunities, housing, and nutrition. As a result, some young people experience alienation, disenfranchisement, and discrimination from their families, communities, and social institutions. These social conditions leave young people more vulnerable to health-damaging behaviours such as substance abuse, delinquent activities, unprotected sexual activity and unplanned childbearing. Some of these conditions also influence young people to engage in sex for money in order to improve or change their situation. Studies show that there are social factors affecting women's ability to control their sexuality. These factors include such things as culturally determined gender inequalities, economic dependency, inadequate access to health care, culturally sanctioned sexual abuse, and violence (Chilman, 1990; Howard, 1988; Stone and Ingham, 2002; Barker and Rich, 1992). As a result, it is

often difficult if not impossible for many women to negotiate safer sexual practices with their partners. As a result of their economic dependency on men, women frequently have little power to refuse sex or to insist on condoms.

Young people in this study said they obtained information about sexual and reproductive health matters from four main sources: the media, schools, health care providers and family and friends. Schools are an important source of information about sexual and reproductive health matters for young people in many countries as they provide invaluable information about a range of topics. In South Africa the educational establishment lack a systematic sex education programmes, and young people have no option but to learn about sexuality from the mass media and peers. Research shows that the mass media and peers are the most common sources of information (Hughes and McCauley, 1998; Barker and Rich, 1992; Stone and Ingham, 2003). Sometimes young people receive incorrect or incomplete information from these sources. Young men and women actually know relatively little about sexuality, although they generally behave as if everything was clear to them (Barker and Rich, 1992). In some cases, individuals from organizations also come to the schools to speak to the learners about the risks of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS).

Young people reported that their sexual drive or natural drive compelled them to engage in sexual intercourse. Sexual development is characterized by the acquisition of skills used to control feelings of sexual arousal and to manage the consequences of sexual behaviour, as well as the development of new forms of sexual intimacy. During adolescence sex drive is a newly felt experience and is very intense; it is often accompanied by baffling thoughts and feelings (Newcomer and Udry, 1985; Miller *et al* 1987). Most societies act as if the sexual drive of young people can be easily controlled. They expect the family to control the sexual expressions of young people until they are perceived to be adults and then they should be able to control their own activities in compliance with cultural mores (Anastasiow, 1983).

Young people showed a fairly good understanding of HIV/AIDS. Condoms were identified as the most effective method of preventing the further spread of HIV infection. In addition, young people were aware of the importance of abstinence and faithfulness. With regard to perceived risky behaviours leading to HIV infection,

young people perceived unsafe sex, multiple sexual partners and accidents to be very risky. Non-use of condoms during sexual intercourse was referred to as unsafe sex. In this case, young people believed that misconceptions about condoms influence young people to have unsafe sex because they feel that is not natural to use them. Other studies have also shown that there are misconceptions about condoms in some societies (UNAIDS, 2003; Varga, 1997; Tillotson and Maharaj, 2001). Some young people believe that condoms place them at risk of HIV infection. They point out that the lubricants used on condoms may contain the virus. As result, young people do not see the point of using condoms during sex since they could be at risk of HIV infection (Toole *et al*, 2005).

Multiple sexual partnerships and unsafe sexual practices were often associated with those people who consume alcohol. It is believed that alcohol influences people to do things that they would not normally do when they are sober such as having sexual intercourse with multiple sexual partners. These kinds of behaviours were seen as risky and were believed to increase the chances of contracting HIV. When people are under the influence of alcohol, it interferes with their sensible judgements and thus promotes unsafe sexual behaviour (LeBeau *et al*, 2001). In a study conducted in the U.S amongst young people, alcohol-related behaviours increased the proportion of young people who had multiple partners. The proportions increased from 8% to 48% among females and 23% to 61% among males (Santelli *et al* 2001). On the other hand, the practice of multiple sexual partners is linked in turn to a wide variety of negative life outcomes, including increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, increased rates of premarital pregnancy and childbearing, increased likelihood of single parenthood, decreased marital stability, increased maternal and child poverty and increased abortion (Rector *et al*, 2003). In addition, young people expressed the fear of helping people during accidents because they believed that touching other people's blood without gloves could lead to HIV infection.

This research also investigated perceived susceptibility to HIV infection. The results suggest that young people living with an HIV positive person have a higher perceived risk of HIV infection. The majority of young people believed that people who are HIV positive may intentionally infect other people. This could be done by squeezing the infected blood in the food that they share with other people. They also believed

that sharing the same toilet and bathroom with an infected person increases the risk of HIV infection. In addition, young people also thought that circumcision conducted at traditional initiation schools could increase the risk of HIV infection **as** traditional healers often use equipment that are not sterilised. For these reasons, young people had a high perceived susceptibility to HIV infection. There is a need to increase understanding among young people of the main routes of HIV transmission and also, create awareness of the risk of HIV infection.

6.2. Conclusion and Recommendations

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), attended by over 180 nations, was a landmark meeting as it highlighted the importance of sexual and reproductive health education for young people. All people have the right to accurate information about human growth and development, human reproduction, anatomy, physiology, family life, pregnancy, childbirth, parenthood, sexual response, sexual orientation, contraception, abortion, sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections.

Young people need sound knowledge, accurate information and relevant skills to face the various challenges of growing up and to be able to express their sexuality in a healthy, pleasurable and responsible manner (Hughes and McCauley, 1998; Katherine *et al*, 1989; Armstrong, 2003). Sexuality, although having its foundation in biology, cannot be considered independently of the society and culture in which it expresses itself. Sexual behaviour is essentially determined by social and cultural norms. Sexuality also entails sexual behaviour (the practice), sexual identities and different historical and cultural forms that sexual identities and practices may assume. This includes the physical aspects of sexual experience (physical activity) manifested through the social aspect since it acquires meaning through language, culture, and values of a determinate society (Chilman, 1990). Knowledge about sexuality is an important factor which influences the formation of opinions and sexual behaviour. There is often a feeling of uneasiness when people try to discuss about sex and contraception. Sometimes the introduction of these topics may lead to lack of trust and also, fears, doubts and suspicions. Therefore, it is important that young people are taught and made to understand proper communication skills with respect to one's sexuality. This will help the young people to understand others, to make responsible decisions and to establish satisfying relationships with persons of the opposite and the same sex, and to be able to express his or her personal values in general, while avoiding misunderstandings. Most young people have experienced some form of pressure related to their sexuality. Therefore, young people must be encouraged to openly discuss these issues in order for them to gain confidence in expressing their own sexuality.

In addition, providing sexuality education helps young people to develop their concept of responsibility and to begin to exercise greater responsibility in their sexual relationships. This can be achieved by providing information to young people and also helping them to consider alternatives such as abstinence, refuse to engage in sexual intercourse, use of contraception and other health measures to prevent sexually-related medical problems and to resist sexual exploitation or abuse (Haffner, 1990). Abstinence, as emphasised by some of the young people, can be used as an effective method of preventing the further spread of HIV infection and at the same time, contribute to a reduction of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infection.

It is evident that in most societies parent-child communication on sexuality and reproductive health matters is still very low. There are traditional norms that make parent-child communication particularly difficult. As a result, young people are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS sometimes due to lack of proper information. Cognitive, affective, and communication strategies must be developed and implemented especially targeting societies where traditional beliefs and norms are still valued in order to help parents be assertiveness when discussing sexuality issues with their children. These kinds of programmes will not only encourage parent-child communication but they can influence parent's sexual literacy. This may again help parents and other adults develop the language to communicate with their children. With these kinds of programmes young people may learn to trust their parents and ask for proper guidance regarding sexual and reproductive health matters. Parents should also be encouraged to discuss sexuality with their children openly.

In South Africa, young people have the highest rates of HIV infection (Avert Organisation, 2005). These are facilitated by factors such as poverty, inequalities, and lack of information. In Venda, traditional initiation schools play a role in informing and preparing young people on issues that would affect them in their adulthood. The main aim of these schools is to prevent young people engaging in premarital sexual activities that could lead to early pregnancy, abortion and unplanned parenthood. If young people follow the instructions provided in the traditional initiation schools, not only will this help reduce premarital pregnancies but also sexually transmitted

infection and HIV/AIDS. However, young people in this study felt that these schools do not have any role to play in ensuring good sexual and reproductive health outcome.

Since traditional initiation schools are used to disseminate information they should also focus more directly on unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS while being used as a form of sexual education for young people. Sexuality education gives young people the opportunity to question, explore, and assess attitudes, values, and insights about human sexuality. This also help young people understand family, religious, and cultural values, develop their own values, increase their self-esteem, develop insights about relationships with members of both genders, and understand their responsibilities to others. This form of sexuality education can help young people develop skills in communication, decision-making, assertiveness, peer refusal skills, and the ability to create satisfying relationships (Chilman, 1990; Whitaker *et al*, 1999).

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